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ONE OR OTHER OF THE YOUNG MEN RODE AT MISS MARSTON'S SIDE WHEN THE LANCES PERMITTED.

## A MODERN MATCH.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

"Borned by soft breezes towards the wished-for haven."

"My dear mother," exclaimed Mary Marston, impatiently, "for Heaven's sake stop this badgering, or you will drive me mad!"

"It's all very well for you to talk in that way," retorted Mrs. Marston, with an angry sniff. "You haven't to worry yourself continually about ways and means, to wonder every month if you can make both ends meet; and if you can't, how you can manage to still clamouring tradespeople's tongues!"

"I don't escape scot free," observed the rebellious daughter.

"You haven't much to trouble you," declared her parent, wrathfully.

"Is it no trouble to be sold every day of my life that I must sell myself for gold—sell myself like a good or a chattel, to the highest bidder in the matrimonial market, and throw inclination, honour, and honesty to the four winds for them to sport with!"

"Don't talk nonsense, Mary!" said Mrs. Marston, sharply, a flush rising to her hard, handsome face. "How many girls marry for a home and position nowadays that money is so scarce—"

"And morality also," put in the girl, scornfully.

"Pshaw! that's the high-falloon kind of nonsense your father used to indulge in. And, at any rate, Mary, it's time now you should look matters fairly in the face, and understand distinctly that you must marry a wealthy man. I want you to make the most of this time we are going to spend at the Roushaws, and to promise me you won't waste your time with detrimental."

"I can't make any promises of the barter and sell kind," replied the girl coldly.

"Oh, Mary, do stop that rubbish! How can you be so stubborn and ungrateful of all my pinching and slaving for you! Is all my toil and labour to go for nothing now, just because you are mad enough to fancy Mark Mavis, a man who has hardly anything save his pay—and that's beggarly enough in a marching regiment!"

"Let us leave Major Mavis's name out of the discussion, mother, please."

"Of course, you don't want to discuss him with me!"

"No, I do not."

"Well, let me tell you, you must put all thought of him out of your head."

"Supposing I won't!" asked the girl defiantly, as she faced round and confronted her mother; and as they stood facing each other, the strong likeness between them was apparent—only Mrs. Marston's face was more haughty than her daughter's, and her expression was hard and cold, while, when Mary smiled, her whole countenance became soft, and sweet, and alluring.

"You will when I tell you that we are on the brink of ruin!"

"Rats, mother!"

"Yes, ruin."

"But—but I don't understand," a bewildered look clouding the lovely grey eyes, that sought her mother's face so anxiously. "Father left you something."

"A paltry three hundred-a-year!" with nothing contempt.

"Well!"

"Well, do you think that sum would keep us as we have lived during the last four years!"

"I don't know."

"No, I don't suppose you do. You wore the pretty dresses and things I provided, went into society and enjoyed yourself, without giving a thought to ways and means!"

"I thought you such a good manager, mother!" exclaimed Mary, apologetically.

"Perhaps I am. At any rate, you've cut a dash in the fashionable world. I managed that, but it must all come to an end now, unless you marry well—remember that. This visit to the Renshaw's is a last expiring effort. After that we must disappear from the *beau monde* that has known us. You will have to go into a shop like Jay's and show off mantles on your fine figure, and I shall look out for a place as housekeeper to an elderly gentleman."

"Mother!"

"It's no use exclaiming 'Mother.' It's the truth—the bare, bald, unpalatable truth, and the sooner you take my advice to heart and act on it the better; and with this last piece of admonition Mrs. Marston swept out of the room, leaving her beautiful daughter to her own reflections, which were anything save pleasant.

"Must I really sell myself for filthy lucre!" murmured the belle, walking up to the mirror hanging over the mantelpiece, and scanning her lovely reflection therein. "Am I to barter the beauty I've been so proud of for a house and money, jewels and fine clothes, a good settlement for myself and a liberal allowance for mother! Pah! It seems horrible to think of tying myself to some old withered wretch I should scorn before marriage, and loathe and hate after. And yet—and yet—if it be true that I must become a shop-girl, and work hard for a living, the unromantic spouse seems the better choice. I'm not fitted for hard work, and shouldn't like roughing it;" and she glanced down at the pretty, fur-trimmed dress she wore, and then round the dainty room with its innumerable knick-knacks, and tasty trifles.

Mrs. Marston's house, though small, was furnished throughout with great taste and nicety, and with a due regard for comfort. She had had an eye for appearances when she left the country town, where she had lived until Mary reached her sixteenth year, on economical principles, and determined to launch her young daughter on the world of fashion with every advantage she possibly—by hook or by crook—could procure her. She managed to save a hundred pounds by dint of scraping, and denying herself even trifling luxuries, and with this sum she furnished the little house at Baywater, having but few things to bring from their country lodgings. Her taste was perfect, and Mary's slender fingers were clever at fancy work, and she made dainty trifles that gave an appearance of elegance to their little drawing-room and many richer folk envied Mrs. Marston her artistic and pretty rooms, where there was nothing to offend the most sensitive eye.

The house arranged and ready for guests, she next turned her attention to her daughter's rather limited wardrobe, and by judicious management, and the help of Mrs. Juckin—a servant who had lived with her in the palmy days of her husband's lifetime, and who was as clever as any French Abigail in the trimming of hats and bonnets, and the shaping and making of gowns and mantles—Mary soon had a wardrobe that equalled in quantity that of many a richer maid, and surpassed some in elegance and style.

When she first appeared in London society the fortune-hunters thought they had another quarry to chase, so stylish and elegant was her

appearance on every occasion but inquiry elicited the fact that, like the milkmaid in the nursery rhyme, her face was her fortune, and that there was nothing to back it. However, despite that fact, she had no lack of admirers, and some lovers presented themselves, only some of them did not find favour with her mother on account of the lightness of their purses, and others she objected to on account of their age, or vulgarity, or some objectionable trait which did not escape her observant eyes; and so after four seasons she was still Miss Marston, to her mother's unspeakable dismay.

Funds had been growing beautifully less, and now ruin stared them in the face, and she would have to make up her mind to give her hand to one or other of her rich elderly admirers.

Her heart was already engaged. A certain Mark Mavis, a young Major in a line regiment, quartered at Hounslow, had won, what many others sighed for in vain, the love of beautiful Mary Marston; but as he was poor, like herself, and knew something of her mother's views for her, he had abstained from actually asking her to be his wife, though there was a tacit understanding between the two—that amiable knowledge people get of each other's hearts and thoughts when they love very dearly—and he knew she loved him, and she knew he worshipped the ground she trod on. And there it was; and life seemed all sizes and seven to the girl as she sat that chill winter afternoon, gazing dreamily at the glowing embers, thinking of Mark, and longing for the cap of Fortunatus, that she might wish herself a wealthy woman.

Her meditations were interrupted by the entrance of a servant who announced "Captain Clutterby," and departed swiftly.

Now Richard, better known as Dick, Clutterby was a relation of the Marstons—a distant cousin; and by reason of this consanguinity, he concerned himself very narrowly with their affairs, and was in the habit of walking into the little Baywater villa at any time of the day, and whenever his chief would give him leave, which was not seldom, for Dick was a good and conscientious soldier, and did his duty thoroughly, and his colonel was always ready to give him leave than any other officer in the regiment. So Dick had a good time of it, and made the most of his opportunities, improving the golden opportunity, and his acquaintance with his lovely but capricious cousin.

He had known and seen but little of her during her youth, but on the arrival of his regiment from India, the year after she appeared on the stage of London society, he hastened to resume his slight acquaintance with Mary and her mother.

He was welcomed warmly by both ladies; by the younger because she had always kept a pleasant memory of the great, good-natured boy, who, when he had come to visit them at the little town of Farr, loaded her with sweets and toys, carried her on his shoulder, and disported himself for her amusement generally, somewhat after the fashion of an ungainly mastiff pup.

By the elder, because he was the possessor of between seven and eight hundred a-year; and though it would have had to multiply to thousands before she would have considered him a suitable aspirant for her daughter's hand, still she saw her way to making use of him, and knew she could accept tickets, the use of his horses, a seat in his phaeton, and other things from a relative, although she had no idea of receiving him in the shape of a son-in-law.

So, metaphorically speaking, Captain Dick was patted on the back and made much of at Baywater-square, revolved as *ami de la maison*, and permitted to escort the beauty and her mamma to entertainments, and bear them about. But, somehow or other, when any eligible old fogey appeared on the scene, or any young puppy blessed with a superfluity of cash, Mrs. Marston, like unto an octopus, would put forth her tentacles, and poor Dick would find himself somehow or other chained to her side and unable to escape from her clutches.

But Dick was good-natured itself, and after a few ineffectual attempts to regain Mary's

side, he would yield himself up to the inevitable, and listen placidly to Mrs. Marston's conversation.

Yet, notwithstanding this outward calmness, Captain Clutterby loved his young cousin with all the strength and fervour of his quiet, intense nature. He had never loved before—he would never love again. All his hopes, aspirations, interests centred in her, and though few outsiders would have guessed it from his quiet manner, the only chance of earthly happiness lay in the hollow of those girlish, slender hands.

"Why, Dick, this is a surprise!" exclaimed Mary, rising to greet him smilingly. "Who would have expected to see you at this hour!"

"Not you, evidently, Mary," grasping her hand in his close, warm clasp, and holding it longer than was absolutely necessary.

"No, it is such a wretched afternoon!" and she glanced with a little shudder out at the now-shrouded streets.

"I don't mind the weather much," he laughed, "especially when I am coming to see you!"

"I think I should mind going to Hounslow to that biting north wind."

"I daresay you would—women are different from men; and then your skirts would get in no end of a mess from the snow."

"I suppose they would," she returned, a little absently, still looking out at the snow that was falling softly and silently, the freight glowing on her beautiful face, tingling the cheeks with its rosy glow.

"Well, have you any news?" she asked, suddenly, looking up at him, and encountering the full glance of his blue eyes, that had something new in them, or, at any rate, something she had never noticed in them before.

"Not much," he replied, drawing a little nearer and leaning his arm on the mantelpiece. "Life progresses much the same as usual at Hounslow. And you, have you none?"

"Very little; town seems dull now."

"The natural reaction after the Christmas festivities."

"Yes, I suppose so. However, we are going to the country next week."

"Are you?" he exclaimed, in some surprise.

"Where are you going?"

"To Ravensden Grange."

"The Renshaw's?"

"Yes."

"I have an invitation there, too, and some other fellows of ours."

"Really! It will be very nice to meet there!" and the grey eyes sparkled, and the lips parted tremulously, and she half fancied the pleasure shown was at the prospect of meeting him, but she was thinking of Mark Mavis.

"Won't it!—jolly!" he agreed, heartily.

"They're very nice people."

"Do you know them well?"

"Yes, they are old friends. Have you been to the Grange before?"

"No, this is our first visit. We only met them last season at the Cliftons."

"I see. Well, I'm sure you will enjoy yourself at their place. They always have nice people and plenty of fun going on; and then he has a splendid stud, so any one who is fond of hunting can indulge his or her taste for it."

"That will just suit me!" exclaimed Mary, with animation.

"Yes, you are a sort of female Nimrod," he smiled, "and would ride anything."

"Of course I would!" she replied, promptly, with an answering smile; "that is the great drawback to being poor. One can't keep horses, and enjoy the greatest pleasure in life."

"It is a great pleasure," he said, musingly, wondering if she would be content to share his modest eight hundred a-year, on which he thought he could keep her one horse.

"Of course it is! Does Maggie Renshaw ride much?"

"No, she is rather timid. Those blue eyes fair little things generally are."

"What she loses!" cried Mary. "There's



nothing better than a ringing gallop on a fine morning."

"Everyone hasn't your nerve, Oon."

"And everyone hasn't her opportunities. The only child of rich people who adore her, and are ready to gratify every whim and fancy, she might have a trio of horses any woman would envy."

"She might, but you see she doesn't care about it."

"It's always the way," declared Mary, a little pettishly. "Those who can have every luxury under the sun can't appreciate their good fortune, while those with a keen appreciation of all good things have to do with next to nothing."

"Fortune of war," laughed Dick. "And she's an awfully good little thing; gives away a lot in charity, and is just the sunshine of her mother and father's home."

"And is quite ready to be the sunshine of yours, Dick," smiled his companion.

"Oh, Mary, what rubbish!" protested the young man. But, nevertheless, his honest face crimsoned up to the roots of his bright, fair hair.

"Why don't you go in and win?" continued Miss Marston, calmly. "She is pretty enough and sweet enough to make any man love her for herself without giving a thought to the substantial dowry she will have."

"I quite agree with you there. But, you see, I don't love her."

"No! and yet I am sure she is very fond of you, Dick."

"I hope for her sake she isn't, and in this life we very seldom fall in love with the right person."

"That is true enough. Yet I can't imagine why you shouldn't love such a pretty, taking girl, especially when she has shown her preference so plainly."

"Because I love you, Mary," returned the young man, quietly.

"Me, Dick?"

Surprise and dismay unlimited rang in Miss Marston's voice, and reigned in her face and manner.

"Yes! Have you never guessed how much I cared for you, dear?" bending his eyes earnestly on her.

"No, Dick. I—I—never—dreamt that you loved me," she stammered, for it had never occurred to her that Clinterby—quiet, unromantic Dick Clinterby—should love her, a woman no different from him in every respect. "I thought you only regarded me with cousinly affection."

"And yet I love you with my whole heart and soul!"

"Oh, Dick, don't—don't say so!" she implored.

"I must, Mary, since it is the truth."

"Oh, Dick, I am so sorry. What can I do?" she asked, lifting a pair of lovely eyes to his, sparkling with the suspicion of tears.

"Nothing, Mary, unless you will marry me," he returned, earnestly, but very quietly, as he took her hand and held it in both his tenderly.

"I can't do that, Dick. I don't love you as a woman should love her husband," she broke out, impetuously, "though I am very fond of you, and you know, and I feel it would never do for me to marry a man I did not love intensely."

"I can believe that," he responded, in his usual tone, only there was a little hopeless ring in them, "and I feared ever since I realised I cared for you so deeply that I had little or no chance, and—"

"And so you are not disappointed!" she queried, eagerly.

"I won't say that. I suppose I hoped fortune would favour me until I heard you say you couldn't marry me."

"And—and—Dick," she began, hesitatingly, "you—you know what mother's plans are for me!"

"Yes, dear, I know—a wealthy marriage. But I hope you will be true to yourself, and not be persuaded into an alliance with a man you could not respect."

"I don't know what I shall do," she replied, with a little restless gesture, as her mother's

words about their being on the brink of ruin recurred to her.

"Well, don't do that; and remember, Mary, if you ever want a friend come to me, and I will do my best to help you in any trouble, let it be what it may."

"Thanks, thanks, Dick. You are good!"

"And don't let what has passed this afternoon make any difference in our constant friendship, or I shall hate myself for having spoken, and let you see that I was fool enough to aspire to your hand."

"Of course I won't, you dear old Dick," she cried, warmly; and then, when he was going to show how friendly she was with him, she put her white hands on his shoulders, and as he bent down, kissed him.

Some women are cruel unwittingly, and Mary Marston was cruel to Dick Clinterby when she gave him that kiss, for the memory of it lingered with him through many a long day and weary night.

## CHAPTER II.

"The time of lovers is brief,  
From the fair first joy to the grief  
That tells when love is grown old,  
From the warm, wild kiss to the cold."

It was black, bitter winter at Ravensden—the village that was the property of the owner of the Grange—Squire Renshaw, as he was called by the country folk. Many of the old gaffers and gammers had turned their weary faces to the wall, and gave up struggling with cold and hunger, and want. Some of the younger ones had fought against their enemies and had palled through dark, drear December, and still lived now that January had arrived, bringing lengthening days, and a little feeble sunshine, to light up mother earth's wide bosom.

Mrs. Renshaw and her daughter had done their best to help the frost-nipped crones by presents of blankets and warm clothing, and strong soups, and other things that they thought might be useful and comforting, and not a day passed without pretty Maggie's face being seen in the village, driving her little pony phaeton that was put on runners, and gilded sledge-wise over the crisp snow, and her basketful of dainties and comforts for the sick folk.

She was loved by all her father's people, and many a blessing was sent after her, as she turned her pouter's head, one chill afternoon towards the end of January, and having emptied her basket, whipped up her little piebald steed, eager to get to the Grange in time for the five o'clock tea, which was a meal at which much merriment and a certain amount of freedom prevailed; for the Squire, who was a bit of a stickler for the proprieties, seldom appeared at that time, as he voted tea "cat lap," and swore by the good, nut-brown Kentish ale, that was his dilly and favourite beverage.

His absence enabled the younger members of his guests to indulge freely in any little flirtation or *affaire de cœur* they might have on hand, Mrs. Renshaw being no drawback to these little affairs.

She was the kindest-hearted, simplest, best of women, and thought the chief aim of her own sex's life should be the winning of a husband. So she rather aided than retarded love matters, being at heart an inveterate match-maker.

Lights were glowing from several windows at the Grange as Maggie drew up Kit and Cliff by a dexterous turn of her wrist, and the entrance-hall looked pleasant as she passed quickly through it, only pausing for a minute to throw off her long, furled cloak; but it was in the Oak-room, where tea was always dispensed, that the greatest coyness prevailed.

It was a pleasant, Gothic old room, with a shoulder high wainscot, and heavily-beamed ceiling, and splendidly carved mantelpiece, all of time-blackened oak. A blazing fire crackled up the wide chimney, round which were grouped ten or a dozen girls, two or three ladies of maturer age, and several men, who, owing to the frost, had not been able to go out a-hunting, and grumbled accordingly with much vigour.

At one corner was a curious table enriched by carving, laden with a hissing urn and an array of cups, a glittering silver teapot, a silver cow with a trap in its tail, which answered the purpose of cream jug, and a variety of tempting cakes warranted to spoil one's appetite for seven o'clock dinner if freely indulged in.

"Just in time, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Renshaw, as her daughter entered. "I'll vacate the post of honour in your favour, or you'll be offended, I know," and, rising with a little laugh, she let Maggie take her accustomed seat behind the urn.

"How nice and cosy it is in here! And the girl, drawing off her gloves and tossing aside her sashkin cap."

"Very different from outside!" cried Ella Blane, a little, dark-eyed gipsified thing.

"Yes; very."

"I can't imagine how you can venture out in such weather," said Mrs. Clifton, languidly, holding a palm leaf between her face and the fire—for she was toasting her feet, and evidently feared for her complexion, which was very fair, almost insipidly so.

She was a large woman, with pale gold hair, big blue eyes and regular features, but her expression was cold, and her whole face "splendidly null."

"My people want me—couldn't do without me, in fact," returned Maggie, with a smile, as she commenced to pour out the tea. "So I must go and see the poor things. Still I am willing to confess that it was an ordeal to-day." And she glanced out of the window at the skeleton bushes and leafless trees, and listened with a little inward shiver to the sound of the bleak wind sighing and sobbing through the bare branches.

"An ordeal! I should think so!" declared the widow, with a flourish of the hand-screen, "I am sure I should never be good at playing the part of Lady Bountiful."

"I think you would," said the girl, gently. "If you saw these people in dreadful want and distress, and had known them all your life, and taken an interest in all their affairs and occupations."

"I think not. It is not in my line, that kind of thing." And Mrs. Clifton twisted a bracelet studded with flashing brilliants round and round on her shapely wrist.

"You amaze yourself. You would be an angel of mercy!" said the Reverend Horatio Stephens, a fat parson, who had the living of Ravensden, and was on the look-out for a wealthy wife, and had "spotted" Mrs. Clifton, she being a widow of some eighteen months' standing, and having been left very well off by the "dear departed."

"You are a flatterer, Vicar," she smiled, looking at his sleek young face with kindly eyes; for, in common with most of her sex, she affected parsons.

"It would be impossible to flatter you," he whispered.

"I wonder whether the Marston's will come!" mused Mrs. Renshaw.

"It is a terrible day for travelling," responded Maggie.

"Oh, I hope they will!" cried Miss Blane. "I am dying to see Miss Marston."

"Well, don't quite expire," remarked a youth—a great, big, burly fellow, who had barely yet passed the hobbledohoy stage, "because we should be inconceivable."

"Don't be absurd, Roy," retorted Ella, for the hobbledohoy was her cousin.

"I am not absurd," he declared; "and I assure you," he added, in a whisper, "that Miss Marston is not nearly as pretty as you are."

"That's only your opinion," she returned, with some contempt. "I've heard that she's lovely."

"So she is," drawled Captain Turner. "But she is very cautious in some things."

"What things?" inquired Ella.

"Well—I can hardly tell you," he said, with some hesitation, which was only natural, as Mary had refused him, and he did not like to publish that, which was her greatest peculiarity in his eyes. "I can't put it in words."

"I know what you mean," grinned Roy. "She's one of those young women who gives the British matron earthquakes, and makes them exclaim—'Oh, my! How dreadful!' at least three times a day!"

"What do you mean by earthquakes, Roy?" inquired Ella, who never having been to London, or seen anything of the wicked world of fashion and frivolity, was naturally very curious about any member of it that she had heard talked of.

"Well, she makes them open their eyes—astonishes them."

"How?"

"Oh, she does things that other people don't do."

"What are they?"

"Plays billiards."

"And plays doo-dle well," put in Turner.

"Rides to hounds in the most reckless, break-neck, manish fashion."

"She has a most wonderful seat, and wonderful nerve," sighed the Captains, who still secretly adored the woman who had rejected his suit, and the offer of his battered heart and rakish reputation with scorn.

"Then she's an awful flirt!"

"Ah!—yes. Leads a fellow on to think she's dying in love with him, and then laughs at him."

"And does heaps of queer manish things!"

"What a funny woman she must be!" said Ella. "I am more curious than ever to see her."

"Your curiosity will be gratified in a few minutes," remarked the daughter of the house, coldly, for she did not like to have her friend talked about in such a fashion. "I see lights coming up the drive; it must be the brougham that we sent to the station to meet them."

And so it proved to be, for in a few minutes the door was thrown open, and Mrs. Marston called in, followed by her daughter. Both ladies wore long velvet mantles, profusely trimmed with fur; and from the air of distinction which was peculiar to both of them, and their general appearance, it might easily have been inferred that they were very well off, and belonged to a family of some note and position.

Mrs. Renshaw and Maggie rose to receive their guests, and welcomed them warmly, Maggie kissing Mary to show the backbiters that she was on very friendly terms with her, and all the men who had any acquaintance at all with her pressed forward to greet her, while little Ella Blane regarded her with eyes full of wonder and admiration, and Mrs. Clifton with malice and envy, though she preserved an outwardly smiling aspect, and actually rose and gave Mary the comfortable easy chair in the angle nook in which she had been toasting her comely person.

"A terribly day for a journey, isn't it?" she said, with her false, cold smile, mentally appraising the value of the sables Mary wore.

"Yes, travelling is slow owing to the snow. But we hardly felt the cold; we were well wrapped up, and had foot-warmers."

"Still, that doesn't keep the frost out."

"We had Captain Clutterby's buffalo robe as well, and we found it infallible against the cold."

"Was Captain Clutterby with you?" asked the widow, a tinge of surprise in her silky tones.

"Yes. My cousin accompanied us," returned Mary quite calmly, though she was conscious that the other's light eyes were fixed with curious intention on her face.

"He is generally in your train," observed the widow, with a light sneer, "quite a cavalier servant!"

"Quite," agreed Miss Marston, with superb calmness, though she was really much annoyed at her companion's manner.

"There will be quite a gathering of the Corinthians here," observed Mrs. Clifton. "Your former friend, Captain Turner, is here already."

"Captain Turner was never a friend of mine," said the beauty haughtily. "Only an acquaintance."

"I see. In such a case a distinction without a difference."

"That is not my opinion."

"Then you have brought Captain Clutterby?" spitefully.

"Exactly. We have brought Dick," acquiesced Mary, languidly, knowing that an affection of indifference to her pointed barbs annoyed the wily widow more than anything else.

"And this evening there will be another arrival from Hounslow."

"Indeed!"

"Yes," and the light blue eyes fixed themselves with a malicious look on Mary's face. "Are you not curious to know who it is?"

"Not the least in the world."

"You won't be so indifferent when you hear it is Major Mavis."

For an instant a scarlet flush swept up over Miss Marston's fair face, and the red lips trembled; she next she recovered herself and said coolly:—

"Major Mavis is certainly a great acquisition to a house party; he is so entertaining, dances well, and is always kind enough to ask me often; and with this parking shaft at the woman whom she guessed instinctively loved the man who had given his whole heart to her, she turned her shoulder to the widow and began an animated conversation with Maggie and Dick, who had come in, and of course was standing near her; for though, now he knew his chance of winning her was hopeless, still she held an irresistible attraction for him, and until she became another man's wife he felt he would never be able to keep away from her.

She was his lodestone, the magnet that drew him, reason as he would.

And what wonder he was fascinated!

She had thrown off the fur mantle, and her beautiful head was leaning against the dark sables, that threw up, cameo fashion, the delicate, patrician features and superb eyes. From time to time, as she chatted with her young friend, these eyes wandered round the old room, but otherwise she gave no sign of the admiration she felt for its quaintness and the many curios dispersed about.

"Time to dress," smiled Maggie, as the sound of a gong rang through the house, and she rose reluctantly to go upstairs, for it was very pleasant to her to be near Dick Clutterby, to hear his pleasant voice, and meet the kindly glance of his eyes. Still she had to, and she went with Mary, who seemed a little thoughtful and pre-occupied, and hardly took much notice of the bedroom allotted to her and her mother, which was old, and splendid with the splendour of good Queen Anne's time.

"If only you had a place like this, Moll!" sighed Mrs. Marston, as she began to remove her travelling dress, "how happy we should be!"

"I don't know that I should."

"Oh, yes you would. You're well fitted to play the part of a woman of fashion."

"It's no fault of yours if I'm not, mother!" she retorted, bitterly.

"I've tried to bring you up in the way in which you should go," said the elder lady with smug complacency, "and I do hope and trust you'll make the most of your time here. There are one or two men here worth your notice, and I hear the great Russian merchant, Mr. Haviland, is expected shortly. He is fabulously wealthy."

"You have not lost much time making inquiries after possible sons-in-law?"

"No; I never let the grass grow under my feet. What are you going to wear to-night?" turning to a huge dress basket laden with finery.

"Black."

"That means the modé, of course!"

"Yes."

"You will look well in that!"

And she did. It fitted her like a glove, and the brilliant jet embroideries enhanced the dazzling whiteness of her neck and arms.

The only ornament she wore was a heart composed entirely of diamonds—an heirloom from her father's family, which was suspended round her neck by a broad, black ribbon. Her entrance was a signal for most of the men in the drawing-

room to leave the fair ones they were chatting with, and cluster round her.

The Rev. Horatio had the happiness of taking her into dinner, and it was a happiness to him, for he thought her a "do-dle fine woman," and supposed she was wealthy.

He might have been less attentive had he known the true state of the Marston's monetary affairs, and that even the gown on her back was not paid for.

However, he did not know it, and he kept up an animated conversation, to Mrs. Clifton's indignation, who, having on one side the hobbler-deboy, and on the other Captain Turner, found it impossible to keep the ball of conversation rolling, and yawned more than once, before dessert was put on the table.

There was a vacant chair by Mary, and once or twice she wondered vaguely who it was for.

Her wonder was answered just as the finger-glasses appeared, for with them came in a tall dark man, with a distinguished air, and an aristocratic, if slightly *Nazé*, face.

It was Mark Mavis, and as he smiled in recognition of the greetings of his host and hostess, he slipped into the vacant chair by Miss Marston, and gave her hand a warm and lingering pressure under the friendly screen of the table.

"Are you surprised to see me?" he asked, in low tones.

"No," she replied, a lovely blush tingling the pure pallor of her cheeks, "I heard you were coming here this afternoon."

"And when did you arrive?" with an admiring glance at the beautiful face he had learnt, to his cost, to love so passionately.

"To-day at five."

"And Dick, too, of course!" with a smile that had not the faintest tinge of jealousy in it, for he was not afraid of poor Dick as a rival.

"And Dick, too, of course," she echoed with an amusing smile that made her quite radiant.

"Happy man, I envy him!"

"Why?"

"Because he sees so much more of you than I do. Do you know this last month has seemed like a year to me, banished from your presence. Tell me, are you glad to see me now?"

For all answer she gave him one swift look from the superb grey eyes, and that satisfied him.

"It has been hard," he went on, in his low, well-bred tones, that reached only her ear; "to keep away, to know you were in Bayswater, and not to dare to come and see you!"

"I thought it was for the best," she murmured.

"For the best, when—"

But just at that moment Mrs. Renshaw gave the signal, and all the ladies rose, and filed out of the room.

In the drawing-room Mrs. Marston made one or two attempts to get near her daughter, and give her a hint to be cooler in her manner to Major Mavis, but Mary kept close to Maggie's side, and did not give her mother a chance.

After the gentlemen joined them, she was, of course, safe, for someone suggested dancing and the young people all trooped down to the great entrance hall, which was just the place for a vase, with its polished oaken boards, and its decoration of spears and flags, and warlike weapons.

"I mean to have the three next," whispered Mark, masterfully, as he drew Mary's hand through his arm. "The three last have been duty dances."

"What! when two of your partners were Miss Renshaw and Mrs. Clifton?"

"Yes. Our young hostess is heavy, and Mrs. Clifton is so spiteful that did she dance ten times better than she does, I would prefer dispensing with the honour!"

"That means that she has been talking against me," smiled Miss Marston.

"Perhaps she has. But—let us begin," and putting his arm round her waist they whirled away over the slippery boards, followed by many admiring glances, for she was the loveliest woman present, and he the handsomest man.

"Let us take a turn through here," he sug-



gated, when the valse was over, pushing aside the heavy curtains that concealed the door leading to the picture-gallery.

"It will be dark," she objected.

"Save for the moonlight. You will not be afraid with me! I never heard of a ghost in the Renshaw family."

"Oh, no, I am not afraid," and she yielded to the pressure of his arm and went with him into the great, vast, dark room, lighted here and there by the moonlight that streamed through the unshuttered windows, and made chequered patches like a chess-board on the dark floor.

"How cold it looks outside," she said, with a little shudder, as they stopped in the deep embrasure of a window, and stood arm-in-arm looking out at the snow-covered earth.

"Are you cold?" he asked tenderly, drawing her arm further through his, and pressing it against his heart that beat heavily with a fever of love and adoration for the beautiful creature near him.

"No. Only it looks so desolate, like a great grave with one huge pall over it."

"Morbid idea, Mary. What have you been doing, or who have you been with to get such notions from?"

"No one new," she replied carelessly, "and as to my life, it has been much the same during the last month as always. The same treadmill round of gaieties."

"The same without me!" he exclaimed, reproachfully.

"No—I—don't quite mean that," she returned hesitatingly.

"I hope not," he put in eagerly. "I would fain believe you had missed me a little."

"Of course I have," she responded lightly, feeling they were treading on dangerous ground. "Are you not the best dancer I know! Naturally I missed you at dances. But you know what I mean by saying life was the same. Our world seems made up of dressing, and flirting, and dinners, and dances, and entertainments of all kinds. A dreary round after all."

"Yes; I suppose it is," agreed her companion a little moodily, "if we analyse it. But it does not do to look too closely under the surface of life."

"Sometimes we can't help seeing its follies and emptiness," she returned bitterly. "The axis on which it revolves, the object for which every one seems to live, is money, money, money!"

"Not everyone, Mary. But what has come to you?" scanning the beautiful face that looked so cold and proud in the moonlight, eagerly.

"You seem so different from what you were."

"I suppose I am tired of all the shams and tricks of society," she replied, with a little joyless laugh.

"Then shall we agree to leave it?" he asked, quickly, pressing her hand closer against his heart. "Dearest, will you not retract that cruel sentence of banishment! Let us marry and live in a little cottage in the country. The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

"Delightful in theory," she sighed, "but what are we to live for—to eat, eat, eat! We are both so poor, Mark."

"But we shall be rich in love, Mary," passing his arm round her waist, and drawing her to his breast. "Tell me again, as you did at the moonlight fête last summer, that I am the only man you ever have or ever will love."

"I shall never love anyone else," she murmured softly, the glamour of the hour and place, and his presence making her forget all worldly and prudent considerations for a few delicious minutes.

"My own darling!" he cried, joyfully pressing a kiss on the fair cheek. "I must make you promise, now that you are in a kindly mood, to be merciful to me, to promise to be my wife."

"Not now, not now," she returned, hurriedly, as though not able to trust herself to his pleadings. "We must go back, Mark; we shall be missed."

"Don't be cruel, Mary. Give me a few moments more, they are so precious—so inexpressibly precious—to me."

"We shall meet often here," she returned, in unsteady tones.

"Yes, but not alone. Do stay."

"I must not," she replied, more firmly, withdrawing from his arms as the memory of her mother's words, "We are on the brink of ruin," occurred to her. "Come," laying her hand on his arm, with a brilliant smile, "they must be playing our third valse now." And reluctantly he yielded, and went back to the hall with her.

"And when is Mr. Haviland coming?" Mrs. Clifton was saying to Miss Renshaw, as they passed her, and she favoured them with a long stare.

"On Friday next," answered Maggie.

"We shall all have to look our best then," observed the widow, with a little malignant grin.

"What a commotion his arrival will cause amongst mamma with marriageable daughters, and amongst portentious damsels themselves."

And Mary knew that her mother would be more flattered than anyone else, and felt that the time of lovers was, indeed, brief in her case.

### CHAPTER III.

"O, faithless love, with lips foreworn,  
And laughing eyes that looked a lie,  
One face forsaken and forlorn  
Will surely haunt you 'til you die—  
One spectre in your brightest hours  
Lurks 'mid the music and the flowers."

THERE are not many things more calculated to excite than following the hounds, and the meet at the covert side is a pleasant and exhilarating prelude. The bright scarlet of the huntmen's coats; the bay of the hounds, so dear to the heart of keen sportsmen; the ringing voices of the "whips," as they keep order amongst the dogs; the ladies on horseback, and the carriages and phaetons, all form a scene both pleasant and cheerful.

Mary, mounted on Mr. Renshaw's favourite hunter, Fire King, a splendid bay, was looking remarkably well in a tight-fitting green habit that showed off her pretty figure to advantage; and the veil that still stopped short of the crimson lips was very becoming.

As usual, she was the cynosure of all eyes, and, as usual, she was surrounded by a crowd of men, each vying with the other in striving to gain her attention; and Mark Mavis set his teeth hard more than once, as he noted how animatedly she appeared to listen to the conversation of her many admirers.

"Who is the girl in the green habit?" asked a middle-aged, heavy-looking man, who, attired in the orthodox scarlet, astride a magnificent grey—a thoroughbred, from his clean, well-shapen head to his delicate legs, yet looked anything but sportsmanlike—of his companion.

"That is Miss Marston," replied the master of the hounds, Lord Falcon.

"An uncommonly handsome young woman."

"Yes. She hasn't a bad point, has she?" remarked the Earl, as he scanned her critically.

"Her figure is as good as her face, and she knows how to ride too. Plenty of nerve, and a good seat."

"The lady seems to be a rare avis," remarked his companion, with a slight sneer.

"There are not many like her, or to compare with her," rejoined the Master, who was a staunch admirer of Mary's.

"How is it, then, the lady is not married?"

"No money. She lacks what you possess, Haviland, so you had better go in and win, as you are on the look out for a wife."

"Not bad advice. I like her *tourneys* and air of distinction; but she's a coquette, I'll wager, for she manages to keep the ball of conversation rolling, though there are at least twenty fellows round her."

"You could not expect to find so beautiful a woman quite free from vanity."

"No, I suppose not; and, at any rate, she'd do a man credit at the head of his table."

"That she would! And I'll tell you what, Haviland," laughed the old peer, dropping his voice, "if I were a bachelor myself I'd go in and try to win."

"What you approve of, my lord, ought to suit Benjamin Haviland," smiled the rich merchant, significantly.

"That means Falcon Royal will not be honoured by your presence any longer for the present," observed the Earl, with an answering smile.

"You are right. I shall accept Renshaw's invitation often pressingly given, and ride there this afternoon. I will, with your permission, tell one of my grooms to ride back to the Royal, and send my things over to Ravensden Grange."

"Do so by all means. That looks as though he meant business this time," murmured Lord Falcon, as his friend wheeled his horse round, and went in search of his groom; but just at this moment the dogs, giving tongue, showed they had drawn the fox from Pibbly Wood; and, like a flash of lightning, away went dogs and huntmen, and the one or two ladies who meant to be in at the death.

It was a rattling good spin. Reynard went straight for Eastern Beacon, and not a few

"Rammed down their hats and got home in their seats."

The hounds were well in line, the pace fast, the scent lying well. On he went, through Downlands to Combe, where, being headed, he turned sharp to the right, over Crendon Ball on to Rentree. The hounds were now pressing hard on him, and, knowing his chance of life was waning, he made a desperate effort to save himself, but ineffectually. The hounds were fresher than poor Reynard, and he paid the penalty of his class and race.

Mary was in at the death, and received the brush, being the only lady then present, and declared herself quite ready for another spin. But the second fox was more wily than the first, took them miles and miles away, and finally ran to earth in Totnes Wood. Then she and Mark, and some half-dozen others from the house-party at the Grange, turned their weary horses homeward, and went slowly through the gathering gloom of the winter's afternoon.

Miss Marston would have enjoyed the long ride, despite the cold and the steady drops of rain that splashed and beat on her face, could she have had a *tête à tête* with Mark, but this was not possible. One or the other of the young men present rode at her side when the lanes were wide enough to permit it, and constantly engaged her attention, while those on ahead would turn now and then to address a remark to her.

Altogether she was not sorry when they arrived at the Grange, and she found herself in the oak-room, lounging in an easy chair before the fire, with a cup of tea in her hand.

"Have you had a brisk run?" asked Maggie, standing by her guest, and ministering to her wants.

"Splendid. We killed the first time, and the second the fox gave us no end of sport though we couldn't kill him."

"And who got the brush?"

"Miss Marston," said the rather vulgar man, who had been presented to Mary during the day, but whose name she had not caught.

"You are glad you went, then?" pursued Maggie.

"To win such a trophy," put in the stout man again.

"It is not the first by a great many," replied the beauty, coldly—for she was annoyed at the persistent way in which the man had followed her about all day.

"I am sure of that; you ride so well. Egad! I never saw anything better than the way you took that ditch!"

"A great deal was due to Fire King," declared Mary, freely.

"He is a fine animal."

"I suppose you are a very good judge of a horse, Mr. Haviland!" remarked Mrs. Clifton, in very distinct tones, and with a sweet smile, but looking at Mary, who, though surprised to discover who this persistent admirer was, managed to reduce all outward sign of it, to the widow's annoyance.

"Pretty well," he allowed.  
"Of course you have a great many hunters! I hear you rode three different horses to-day."

"Yes, I have a good many. I think it a bad plan to ride a horse too hard."

"So it is, but we can't all have a dozen in our stables."

"Do you ride?" he asked, abruptly, eyeing the widow keenly.

"Yes—not often to hounds. I am not possessed of Miss Marston's nerve," with a little disparaging movement of the fat white hands.

"It is better to have iron nerves than no nerves at all, and scream at the sight of a mouse, or faint if a black beetle crawls over the carpet," exclaimed Mary, contemptuously, as she gathered up her habit in one hand, and her whip and gloves in the other, and left the room, while the widow vowed in her heart that she would have a dire revenge for that openly administered snub.

That night the host, prompted by his new guest, brought Benjamin Haviland up to Miss Marston, while Mark Mavis fell to Mrs. Clifton's lot; and that languid and spiteful dame determined to make the most use of her time.

"Quite an addition to our party, isn't he?" she began with a nasty acid little smile.

"Eh! Who is an addition?" inquired Mark quickly, for he had been surreptitiously watching Mary, and noted the marked attention paid her by her vulgar companion.

"Mr. Benjamin Haviland."

"Which is the gentleman with the biblical name?" he asked lightly.

"Oh, don't you know him?" in tones of pretended astonishment.

"I have not that pleasure."

"Mr. Haviland is that gentleman who has taken Miss Marston in."

"Oh, really," with a disparaging glance at the red-faced, middle-aged man.

"Not much to look at, is he?"

"I can't say I admire him. But then there is no necessity for me to worship his money-bags, and that is what most of the penniless girls do," with a spiteful glare in Mary's direction.

"Oh, indeed!" said the Major again, seeing his companion expected him to say something.

"He's enormously rich. I should be almost afraid to say how many thousands a year he has!"

"Then I wouldn't say it if I were you, Mrs. Clifton," smiled the houseman.

"I mean that I am afraid you wouldn't believe me if I mentioned the sum," she explained, giving him a searching glance.

"Is it so very great?" he inquired, with a little misgiving, for he knew only too well what a worshipper of Mammon Mrs. Marston was.

"Enormous. I have been told sixty thousand a year, and from his style of living, etc., I should say it is quite that."

"A princely fortune!" murmured Mark.

"Yes; and his place, Listowel Abbey, is magnificent, while his stud is allowed to be one of the best in the South of England. Altogether it is no wonder all the flirty girls are running after him, and trying to win him;" and again the light cruel eyes wandered down the table, and fastened on Mary's fair face; and that time a pair of dark ones followed them, and grew hard as they marked the pleasure and animation on the girl's face, for Ben Haviland was telling her about his horses, and she was always interested in that topic.

"I should think that will be a case," remarked the widow, with another sharp smile, as she encountered Major Mavis's eyes. "That is to say, if he doesn't find out what a flinty-hearted flirt the lady he seems to admire so much is, before he commits himself irrevocably, and offers her himself and his fortune."

"Let us hope that he will, if only for the lady's sake," retorted her companion, sarcastically, though the angry blood rose over his face, even to the roots of his dark hair.

"It would be a very good thing for her," observed Mrs. Clifton, nonchalantly, and with utter disregard for the angry ring in his tone.

"I hardly think so. Miss Marston's looks should at least secure her a handsome husband, as well as a wealthy one. Her mating with the biblical gentleman would indeed be a case of beauty and the beast," and he cast a look of contempt and disgust at Mr. Haviland, who looked more like a waiter than anything else, in evening dress.

"Beauty isn't everything, and beggars can't be choosers!"

"What do you mean?" asked Mark, coldly.  
"I mean that the Marstons are on the brink of ruin, and that the beauty's worldly mamma knows quite well her only chance of retrieving their fallen fortunes is to marry the daughter well, and get her bills paid by a wealthy son-in-law."

"They hardly give one the idea of impudent people," said Mavis, hating the conversation, and loathing himself for listening to anything in disparagement of the woman he loved, and yet, under the circumstances, being utterly unable to escape from the clutches of the wily woman who meant to do her best to part these two, who loved so dearly, and catch the soldier's heart in the rebound.

"Of course not. They've gone on the credit system, and owe a sum that is quite appalling. Those smart gowns they're decked in aren't paid for!"

"You seem to have an intimate acquaintance with their affairs!"

"Madame Modiste makes my gowns as well as theirs, and the poor creature often bemoans herself bitterly to me, and regrets having trusted them so largely. However, that will be all altered now, and I doubt not Mr. Haviland will behave liberally towards them as to settlements, etc., and then, having planted her darts, and set the ball a-rolling, the widow exerted herself to be agreeable and fascinating, and so far succeeded that before long Mark found himself laughing over her droll stories, and forgetting for the time his fears and misgivings.

That night Mrs. Clifton managed to chain Mark to her side when he first came to the drawing-room, and by hook and by crook kept him from a tête-à-tête with Mary, in which she was ably, but unconsciously, aided by Mr. Haviland, who hovered round the beauty like a huge, ungainly moth round a candle, much to her annoyance, for it was remarked that no one could mistake it.

An angry scene was the result when mother and daughter were alone, for Mrs. Marston was injudicious enough to speak openly on the subject, and say that Mary was showing her good sense in accepting his attentions, on which she fired up, and declared she would not speak to the man again, that he was an odious wretch, and she meant to snub him on every possible occasion, and show him how little she valued him or his wealth.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force, Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse."

MARY, however, found it rather difficult to carry out her threat in entirety. It is no use knocking one's head against a stone wall, and, metaphorically speaking, Mr. Haviland was a stone wall; or, at any rate, he was as hard, as blind, as dull of comprehension, apparently, as one when he chose.

He did choose not to see the snubs the beauty administered. He received them with placid indifference, and took no notice of her freezing manner. He had had a conversation with Mrs. Marston, and knew she approved of his suit, and that there would be no difficulty there.

They understood each other a merveille, and so he set himself down to win this lovely girl he coveted for his wife in much the same dogged, steady, determined fashion as he had to amass the colossal fortune he possessed, and with little or no fear of not ultimately winning.

He was always at her side, in season and out. In fact, he haunted her like a shadow, to her

intense annoyance, and managed, by right-down doggedness, to keep other would-be lovers at a distance.

Mark Mavis grew very sore at heart as the days wore on. He never got a chance of saying a word alone to Mary. Mrs. Marston, Mrs. Clifton, and Mr. Haviland took good care of that; and the wily widow dropped many insinuations—told him many of those half-lies that are so difficult to refute, and that made him think Mary wished him to keep his distance—and, in his anger and sorrow, he entered into a desperate flirtation with Mrs. Clifton, which hurt and annoyed the girl he loved terribly, for she was intensely proud, and made the barrier that had arisen between them harder to bridge.

Matters were in this state when they all went out a-hunting one fine February morning—some of the ladies on horseback, some in dog-carts, some in pony phaetons; and four dog-waggers, amongst whom was Mrs. Marston, in the barouche.

Now Mrs. Clifton, though a coward at heart in the hunting-field, had got herself up in the latest of habits and the jantiest of hats, and mounted on a fairly quiet horse, was doing her best to keep Mark Mavis chained to her side.

She had not much difficulty in doing this. He was quiet and distrustful, and made no effort to escape from her clutches bodily, though his eyes followed the graceful figure in the green habit going on ahead wistfully.

"That is a fine horse Miss Marston is on, isn't it?" remarked his companion at last.

"Yes," he agreed, turning his eyes from the rider to the horse, a splendid grey—own brother, apparently, to the one Mr. Haviland bestowed, and which he generally rode. "Is it a new purchase of our host's?"

"Oh, dear no! That is handsome Benjamin's steed."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, his face growing dark, as he set his teeth, and tugged viciously at the curb, making his mettlesome bay rear angrily.

"Sent over to the Abbey for it, in order that his future wife may try its paces."

"His future wife?" he repeated, unaware how hollow and despairing his voice sounded.

"Is it all settled then?"

"Preliminaries are. And before the summer is in full swing there'll be a fashionable marriage at St. George's."

"And beauty will mate with the beast," he muttered.

"And the beast will endow beauty with all his worldly goods and chattels, which are not to be ascertained at; and I think, after all, she will have the best of the bargain. Of course, it's nothing else but a bargain, for I believe she is as cold as a stone, and has just about as much heart."

"How kind you women are to one another!" sneered Mark; and before the oily widow could give him a sweet answer, the view hulloa swelled on the air, and away dashed the Major's bay, leaving Mrs. Clifton's milder mettled steed far in the rear.

That day three of the field rode desperately, Major Mavis, because he was mad with despair and jealousy, and would as soon have broken his neck and ended his troubles as not; Mary, because she had a wild desire to distinguish herself, and by some wild freak draw his attention to herself; Captain Cuttlerby, because he thought Miss Marston would come to grief, and thought he ought to be near in case of an accident.

Mr. Haviland rode hard too, but with a certain amount of caution. He did not want to strain or maim his splendid favourite; and more than once he swore a good round oath as he saw Mary put his hunter at tremendous jumps, and raise him across rough ground with the coolest indifference. However, there were no casualties, and they all jogged home in the twilight, in rather a grumpy and silent fashion.

Mary did not, as usual, go to the oak room for tea, but went straight upstairs to her room. Here she found her mother with dishevelled hair, red eyes, and a generally dilapidated appearance sobbing bitterly.

"What is the matter, mother?" she asked, going over and standing beside her.



"Oh, Mary, Mary, the blow has fallen sooner than I thought it would!"

"What blow?"

"Madame Modiste."

"Well!"

"She is going to make me a bankrupt!"

"Mother!" horror, and incredulity mingled in the girl's tone.

"She is!"

"See must not! We must prevent her doing so."

"We can't!"

"Why not?"

"We owe her too much."

"How much?"

"Nearly twelve hundred pounds!"

"Mother, how could you run up such a bill?"

"I did it for your sake, Mary!" she sobbed,

"to get you well settled. And now help me out of this difficulty, my dear, dear child, or I shall die of shame, and falling on her knees before her daughter, she raved and moaned, and tore her grey hair, and besought Mary to save her, and marry Mr. Haviland; and shocked and horrified beyond measure the girl gave the promise that was to blight her whole life.

The result of this scene was that Mrs. Marston had to go to bed, utterly prostrated; and Mary, feeling utterly dazed and bewildered, hurriedly dressed herself and went down: Dick took her in, and his cheerful conversation did much to restore her to her usual frame of mind. After awhile she noticed that Major Mavis was not at the table.

"Where is your *Fidus Achates*?" she asked.

"En! Which do you mean?" with a smiling glance in Maggie's direction, for of late they had been going to the village together to see the gaffers and gamblers.

"Major Mavis, of course."

"On, don't you know."

"No, what?"

"He went away an hour ago."

"Went away!" she repeated, blankly.

"Yes. Some business, I believe. Didn't you see him before he went?"

"No," and in spite of her efforts her voice trembled. To think that he should leave the Grange without one word of farewell to her nor even a hand clasp! It wounded her proud heart cruelly; and she commenced chatting feverishly to Dick on indifferent subjects, while an angry red spot burnt on either cheek; and he, for the first time in his life, began to wonder whether his beautiful cousin cared more for Mark Mavis than was well for her own happiness, or her mother's matrimonial projects, for being in love with her himself, and of a particularly easy-going indifferent temperament, he had never suspected his friend Mark of being a victim to the same hopeless passion that threatened to wreck his own life.

That night Mary was destined to receive fresh humiliations, for Mrs. Clifton, with her iciest, nastiest smile, seated herself beside her, and began talking of the Major, and his sudden departure, and insinuated that she had known he was going for some days, and that there was more between them than could be conveniently published to the world at present; and the girl listened with keen and bitter anguish to the wily woman's lies, and had to exert all her powers to keep back the sob that rose to her lips.

As one in a dream, she got up and strayed into the conservatory, where, thanks to hot-water pipes, and other appliances, the temperature was that of the sunny South, and the yellow-flowered cactus blossomed, and orchids displayed their delicate flowers, and red and white camellias grew side by side, and tropical plants roared their green heads, and palms and ferns made it a pleasant retreat.

Father who was quickly followed by Mr. Haviland, who, having been summoned to the Abbey by his land-steward on important business, and knowing he must leave the Grange in two or three days, had determined to put his fate to the touch, and win or lose this woman whom he admired so much, and coveted for his wife.

"Are you fond of flowers?" he asked, by way of a prelude, as he paced along at her side, through the dim, green aisles.

"Yes, very," she replied, dreamily.

"But living in London, I suppose you can hardly indulge your taste much!"

"No. We have a small conservatory, but it contains nothing rare, nor very beautiful."

"Ah, well! I shall hope some day to show you my flowers at the Abbey!"

"I have heard you have acres of glass there," she rejoined, with a faint smile, trying to shake off the lethargy that oppressed her, and show a polite interest in his conversation.

"Yes, I have a good many houses. My gardener prides himself on his exhibits, and I let him have his way, and do pretty well as he likes."

"You are a lenient master!" she observed, absently, toying with a rose-red camellia.

"I am so much away, you see, that my people have their own way in almost everything!"

"That just suits them I should think."

"Yes, but it doesn't suit me. In fact, Miss Marston, I want to change my style of life," looking keenly at her pale face, "I want to be more in my own house—in fact, to have a home. Now to have that, I must have a wife!"

At that word the girl started, and seemed to awake from a dream—to the unpalatable fact that this fat, red-faced man was going to propose to her.

But she made no attempt to fly and escape the ordeal. In fact, she was too weary and heart-sick to care what happened, and stood there like a fair statue, toying with the crimson flower, and listening to the words that fell from Benjamin Haviland's lips.

"May I speak of something that concerns me very narrowly, Miss Marston?"

"Yes, Mr. Haviland," she assented, mechanically.

"Well, I am going to put a plain question to you, and I want a plain answer. I'm not a hot-headed boy to go in for love-raptures or any foolery of that sort, and tell you I'm dying for your smile or a kind word; but I like you better than any other woman I have ever known, and I admire you immensely; so will you be my wife?"

"I will be as candid as you are," she replied with a little cold smile, recovering herself now that the supreme moment had come, "and tell you that I have no love to give you, such as a woman should feel for her husband, and that I am generally thought to be hard and heartless!"

"Hearts are out of date," he rejoined, with a sneer, "and as for love, I don't believe in it. Infatuation on one side, folly on the other—a sort of feeling sure to die out between husband and wife. So will you have me?"

"Yes, I will marry you," she answered recklessly, caring little what became of her since she could not be Mark's wife.

"That's right. Let me put this on till I get you a better one," drawing a ring from his little finger, that was all too large for her dainty digit, and made her shudder as she felt its contact, and realised that it was the fore-runner of that other circlet that would bind her for life to a man she loathed and detested.

"I suppose you won't go on with the nonsense most young women think it right to affect on these occasions," he continued, "and object to a speedy wedding!"

"When you like!" she replied, with almost insulting indifference.

Since she had to be sacrificed, what did a week or a month either way matter!

"I will speak to your mother to-morrow, and now let us go back to our friends;" and drawing her hand through his arm he led her back in triumph to the drawing-room, and his air of possession, and the calmness with which she accepted his attentions, coupled with the fact that a splendid diamond blazed on the third finger of the left hand, led everyone to conclude they were engaged.

"Is it true, Mary?" asked Dick the next morning, as they stood alone together for a few moments by the blazing log fire, waiting for the horses to come round.

"Is what true?" she replied, avoiding his gaze.

"That you are going to marry Mr. Haviland!"

"Yes, Dick; it is true," she answered, slowly and heavily.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed in dismay. "I did not—I could not—believe it, and now I hear it verified from your own lips. You mean to sell yourself, Mary?"

"Yes; I am obliged to do so."

"Obliged! In this a free country! You jest, surely!"

"No. We are on the brink of ruin, and I have promised mother to marry this Coombe in order that she and I may have plenty to eat and drink, fine clothes to wear, and a house over our heads for the rest of our lives."

"Is it as bad as that with your monetary affairs?" he exclaimed, quickly.

"Matters could not be worse. Ruin, actual ruin, is staring us in the face!"

"Can't I help you, Mary?" he asked, earnestly. "You know every penny I possess is at your disposal."

"Thank you, dear Dick," she replied, gently. "But you cannot help us. We owe Madame Modiste alone more than a year's income, and there are others clamouring for their money. It would take about three thousand pounds to satisfy them, mother tells me, and then we have to live. So you see there is nothing for me but to marry Coombe!"

"This is terrible," he groaned, "for I fear you neither love nor respect this man."

"No, I do not," she replied, drearily. "He is not the kind of man to win a woman's respect, much less her love. Still, were he ten times worse I should marry him. There is no other course possible. I am not out out for a lady's-maid or a shop-girl," she added, with a dreary laugh.

"You can become my wife," he whispered, eagerly, his blue eyes alight with light and hope. "I am not rich, but I can give you ordinary comforts, and a great love."

"Thank you, Dick, for your noble offer," she replied, in husky tones, "but only a man with great wealth can help my mother and me. There are these wretched debts, and then mother must be provided for. With her tastes and habits she could not possibly do with less than four hundred a-year, and I am naturally extravagant. We should pull you down into the same slough of despond into which we have sunk and stick fast."

"I will risk all that," he rejoined, quickly. "Anything to save you from the awful fate of becoming that man's wife."

"Too late!" she sighed. "I have pledged my word, and already mother has written to Modiste, telling her everything will be settled to her satisfaction shortly. I have burnt my bridge of boats. I cannot go back."

"You can if you wish. You are not his property yet. Ob, Mary, let me beseech you—"

But at that moment Mr. Haviland, habited in scarlet, made his appearance and effectually put an end to the conversation between the cousins by carrying Miss Marston off, and helping her to mount the grey.

"To think of her wedding such a fellow as that!" groaned Dick, looking after them with wistful eyes. "Why, he'll think more of his horses and dogs six months after they are married than he will of her!"

## CHAPTER V.

"Never had earth so fair a summer,  
Never the red rose bloomed so bright!  
Warm winds wafted her fragrance from her,  
Clear skies flooded the land with light.  
Dust delight is a living sadness;  
Heart of mine we have found it so.  
Blink and sorry for love's brief madness,  
Long ago—so long ago!"

By wealth, adulation, travelling abroad, being possessed of fine diamonds and fine clothes, overwhelmed with flattery, and courted by the high and mighty of the land, could make a woman happy, Mrs. Haviland ought to have been happy.

And yet there were those among her intimates who declared she was not quite happy, that there was a crumple in the rose-leaf that chafed her sorely; and, though she was always brilliant and witty in society, there were times, in the seclusion of her own room, when she showed signs of melancholy and *ennui*.

During the four years of her married life, Mary had plumbed the dark depths of despair and humiliation in private. In public she bore herself well and proudly, with an insolent hauteur that became her well, and did the honour of her husband's house gracefully, letting no one see the reverse of the medal if she could help it.

They had spent nearly the whole of the four years abroad—a great portion in Rome, for Mr. Haviland liked it; and Mary loved to wander over the Campagna's far-reaching plain, and her eyes would travel over the long range of ruined aqueducts, and tumbled-down buildings, to where it was bounded by the blue and silver line of the *Monte Mario*, over the cottages of vine-dressers, over tomb and walls of dateless ruin, over the medieval towers, and the peaceful herds of sheep and oxen. However, at last, they had to leave the sunny plains of Italy and return to England.

It was May when they arrived, a sweet, soft May, with blue skies and wooing breezes, and steady, genial sunshine, that was ripening fruit and flowers apace. London was crowded, and they were hardly settled in Balgrave Square when a host of friends and acquaintances hastened to visit them, and invitations for diverse entertainments poured in.

These Mr. Haviland commanded Mary to accept, for he meant to parade his beautiful wife before the *déité* of London society, wearing the famous suite of diamonds he had given her on their marriage, and attired in some of Worth's and Pingat's masterpieces.

He wanted her to be admired. He took it as a compliment to his own good taste and judgment; and yet he was wildly jealous of her at times, and his violence and overbearing demeanour startled, if it did not actually alarm, her at first.

After a time she got used to it; and, as she learned to know her contemptible husband better, she treated all his anger and reproaches with cold scorn, that enraged him beyond measure.

She had never professed to love or respect him; and as her mother had four hundred a-year secured to her for life, and was able to keep up the Baywater Villa, she was too reckless to care what became of herself, and defied him when he bullied, and from him when he offered caresses, and treated him always with a superb contempt that galled the man of wealth terribly, and made him sometimes half repent his marriage.

It certainly had proved a mistake for both of them, and their natures had deteriorated. Mary was reckless and careless, and sought, in a round of pleasure and ceaseless gaiety, distraction from unpleasant thoughts and vain regrets.

These regrets became positive torture on the night after their return to England. They were at the opera, and while she was chatting carelessly to two or three admirers who had come to their box, her eyes fell on two familiar faces in the stalls. One was Dick Clinterby's, and the other Mark Mavis!

A thrill ran through her as she encountered the latter's eyes fixed intently on her face; and in spite of her composure and habitual calmness, a flush spread up to her brow, and a look almost of terror clouded the great grey eyes as she bowed to them.

A few minutes later Dick rose and made his way to the box, but Mavis remained in the stalls, and divided his attention between the stage and Mrs. Haviland.

"Mary, are you quite happy?" whispered her cousin, when everyone else was listening intently to Patti singing "Home, Sweet Home." "Oh, yes!" she replied, with a languid smile. "Happy as the world counts happiness."

"And not as you would wish to be," he observed, quickly.

"I did not say so," she replied, a trifle haughtily. "Mr. Haviland is extremely liberal. I have an unlimited sum to spend on dress, countless suites of diamonds and other jewels, a town house, a country abbey, more carriages than I know what to do with, and a regiment of servants to fly to do my bidding. What more could any woman want?"

"Nothing, of course," he assented, coldly. But as he wended his way back to Hounslow that night the young man knew that the old Mary Marston was dead, and that the new one was a very inferior article.

The next night, at Lady Silvermonth's ball, one of the first people Mrs. Haviland saw as she entered the room, leaning on her husband's arm, was Major Mavis. In spite of herself her eyes brightened involuntarily as they rested on his dark, handsome face; and he came forward at once, with his usual cool, nonchalant manner, to ask her for a dance—a request to which she at once assented, and made no objection; while as to the charming Benjamin, he was busy talking politics to his host, the Earl of Silvermonth, and had eyes for nothing and nobody.

"Shall we take a turn outside?" suggested Mark, after they had spun round the room two or three times; "It is so hot in here."

"If you like," she assented. And together they strolled out into the lovely grounds surrounding Silvermonth House, and paced slowly down a side path dimly lighted by tiny coloured lamps.

"It is a long time since we met," he remarked, looking down at the beautiful face, that looked so white in the starry gloom.

"Yes," she agreed, with a sigh; "and so much has happened since."

"True. For instance, you are married."

"And you, Major Mavis! Are you not married also?"

"I! No; certainly not!" he rejoined, quickly, something very like amazement in his tone. "I am a bachelor still, and likely to remain one now."

"But—but—what—about Mrs. Clifton?" she faltered.

"Mrs. Clifton! What of her?"

"I understood, when we were all staying together at the Renshaws, that you were engaged to her."

"Who told you that lie?" he asked, sternly.

"Was it a lie, Mark?" she queried, joyfully, the old familiar name slipping out in her agitation.

"An unmitigated one!" he declared, decisively.

"Who told it you, Mary?"

"Mrs. Clifton."

"Confound the woman!" he exclaimed, wrathfully. "I see it all. It was part of the plan to separate us."

"A plan to separate us!" she repeated, confusedly.

"Yes, Mary. Don't you see?" he went on, pressing her arm against his heart, as though to check its wild throbbing. "They knew we loved each other dearly, and thought it might win the day against money; and so, to make things sure, your mother and Mrs. Clifton told lies to each of us, and managed to part us."

"Oh, Mark!" she cried, in anguish, looking at him with those eyes he loved so well, "and we might have been so happy together!"

"And may be still," he cried, madly, taking her in his arms and kissing her. "He is nothing to you, that dummy—that money-grubber whom you have married. Leave him. Let us go away together and be happy!"

"Mark, you must never speak like that again to me," she said, gently, freeing herself from his embrace. "I must not, dare not, listen to you."

And that night he said no more to her, but in his heart he swore he'd win her to be his own despite all obstacles. And as the summer days wore on he laid steady siege to the heart that was already his.

Wherever Mrs. Haviland appeared there was Mark Mavis, at her side whenever he could be, openly and pointedly devoted. And at last it began to dawn upon Benjamin that the linesman

was something more than an ordinary acquaintance of his wife's; and in his coarse way he questioned her, and ordered her not to be seen with him flirting and dancing with him in public.

"Would you prefer me to do it in private?" she asked with languid insolence.

"I should prefer you not to receive his attentions at all. And, hark ye, madame, if you don't obey me, and give this fellow his *couper*, I'll make you do it!"

"Pooh!" she laughed contemptuously. "I shall dance with him and speak to him as often as I please."

"You jade! I'll look you up," and seizing her arm in an iron grip, he shook her till she nearly became insensible, when pushing her roughly on to a chair, he turned and left the room.

She remained where her brutal husband flung her for nearly an hour. Then, rising, white and still trembling, she went up to her room, and making a careful toilet, drove down to Chiswick, where Mrs. Darwent was giving a garden party to a select few, and where she was to meet Mark.

"How pale you look! What is the matter?" he asked, as they strolled off, Dick Clinterby sending an anxious and uneasy look after them; for already busy tongues were coupling their names together, and he feared the worst, knowing his cousin's temperament, and that of the hound to whom she was bound.

"I haven't recovered from my shaking yet!" she replied with a little bitter smile.

"Your shaking! What do you mean?" he replied, eagerly.

"Look!" And turning back her sleeve she showed a terrible bruise on the soft, white flesh.

"Who did that?"

"My husband."

"The brute! How can you stay with him, Mary! He will murder you one day in a fit of jealousy!"

"I wish he would," she answered, drearily. "I am tired of life, and ready to die!"

"Now, you would not be if you were with me in the sunny South. Oh, Mary, if you really loved me, you would not condemn me to this darkness of despair. Have you no pity for my misery—my desolation?"

"Mark! Mark! don't!" she implored.

But he was deaf to her pleadings, and there in that garden, sweet with midsummer roses, bright with midsummer sunshine, he urged her to fly with him, telling her what a heaven on earth he would make for her in some sunny Italian nook, urging her by every sophistry of which he was master to forget honour and duty, and yield the victory to love alone, and love won.

The unhappy woman gave way to his passionate prayers, and promised to fly with him that night—gave way before the pleas from those dearly-loved lips; and the struggle being over, gave herself up to the wild delight of showing her mad love for him.

After arranging the details of the flight, they parted, she driving up to town in her carriage, he going with all speed to Hounslow.

When she arrived at Balgrave square she was surprised to see Dick Clinterby waiting for her.

"Why, Dick! what brings you here?" she exclaimed with a feverish affectation of gaiety. "I thought you were at Mrs. Darwent's!"

"I was, but left early, and came on to see you."

"What about?" she asked, fearfully, for something in his tone and manner alarmed her.

"About the fearful position in which you stand, and the terrible act you contemplate!" he answered, quietly.

"Dick!" cried the wretched woman, throwing out her arms with a gesture of despair.

"Have you thought of the sin?" he went on, "of the shame and disgrace you will entail on your family? If not, think of it, Mary, and hesitate before you sacrifice yourself and your honour!"

And drawing her down by his side gently and kindly, even as a brother might, he showed her the folly and error of her ways; and



she, sobbing and moaning, wrote the letter he brought her to, which told Mavis she had repented of her determination to go with him.

Dick took this letter and departed for Hounslow with it, wishing to deliver it before Mark started for town.

He found him busy thrusting some things into a portmanteau, and gave him the letter, saying simply: "My cousin asked me to give you that," and left the room.

Mark tore it open, and read it with a variety of emotions struggling for mastery in his breast. He was not a bad man, and he was half glad that the woman he adored should escape the terrible fate into which his mad passion would have plunged her—the misery, the degradation, the shame!

On the other hand, he loved her dearly, and loathed the thought of leaving her in the power of the cold, brutal man to whom she was bound, and who, according to the laws of his country, might knock her about and abuse her just as much as ever he pleased, because she was his wife!

But what was his joy and thankfulness, on taking up the paper next morning, to see the account of Mr. Haviland's death the day before.

He had been seen riding down Harrow Hill at a tremendous pace, when the horse stumbled, and threw him clean over his neck, and the unfortunate merchant alighting on his head, broke his neck, and never stirred or spoke again.

From what a terrible needless sin had he and Mary been saved—saved by Dick Clutterby—honest, good-hearted Dick—from that Midsummer madness!

Eighteen months later there was a dual wedding at the tiny Tudor church on the Renshaw estate. The officiating clergyman was the Reverend Horatio Stephens. The brides were Mary and Maggie, and the bridegrooms Mark and Dick.

The latter, seeing it was useless to enter the lists for his cousin's hand, Major Mavis distancing all competitors, took play on little, blue-eyed Maggie, who was fretting herself to death for love of him, and asked her to become his wife, and be content with a milk, and somewhat milk-and-water affection, which she accepted eagerly; and he never gave her cause to regret it, being only second in devotion to Mark, who remained his wife's lover to the last day of his life!

[THE END.]

### ANGLO-JAPANESE SIGNS.

A CONSTANT source of amusement to the traveller in Japan, says the Rev. Francis E. Clark, in the *September Century*, are the Anglo-Japanese signs over the shop doors.

In the larger cities many shopkeepers have applied to a sign-painter who has acquired that dangerous thing, a little knowledge of English, without drinking deep at the Plerian spring, for a "shingle" that shall express to the world in Western characters the nature of their business. The assurance of these sign-painters is not matched by their familiarity with English spelling, construction, moods, and tenses; and the result is often amusing in the extreme. For instance, one is amazed to see in Tokio a sign that boldly announces,

A TAILOR CUT TO ORDER.

Another one informs us

PHOTOGRAPHER EXECUTED HERE.

A better in Kobe announces that he sells

GENERAL SORT STRAW HAT,

and another informs the public that he is a

DEKALAN NEWANDSTILLHRETRAWHAT

WILL MAKE TO ORDER.

Some of the signs really seem to suggest needed English words, like

BUTCHERY AND PROVISIONS

Why not "butchery"? Another tells us that he deals in

SOFT GOODS.

He does not mean "soft drinks," either, but soft woollen goods. A baker tells us that he keeps a

BAKETRY.

Another sign which I daily passed for nearly a week told the world that within dwelt

THE INVENTOR OF KOBE.

though what he invented, or when, or why, deponent saith not. A merchant in Osaka has hung out his shingle with superfluous articles, as follows:

PATENT THE CHARCOAL PATENT THE POCKET STOVE

The conjunctions are almost as difficult for the average sign-painter to master. Consequently he sometimes tells the world of a

HOUSE SHIP AND PAINTER,

or that within there is for sale

SHOOTINGAN POWDER AND.

A glance at the rifles, shot-guns, and powder-horns within makes the sign plain. Another tells us that

BICYCLE TO LEAD, BEL, AND

are within. It is not strange that single letters should get out of place, as in

RESTAURAND.

MEALS AT ALL HOUSE,

CIGARAND AND CIGARETTED,

and the like. But it does seem as if a wag with a keen sense of humour had been at work when we read, as we do in a prominent street of Osaka:

ER—MAN—WASH.

Put the last syllable first and you will catch the thought. A wag, too, must have prepared the label for a dealer in borax, who, after extolling the purity and value of his preparation; put in large letters at the bottom:

BEWARE OUR TRADEMARK.

Perhaps the most startling milk sign in Japan is:

COWS MILKED AND RETAILED,

which, if I mistake not, is to be found in Kioto. Cloth-dealers also have had not a little difficulty in making known their wares. Here is one of their signs:

SILK HEMP, COTTON AND SEVERAL HAIRS, SEVERAL KINDS YARN.

REAL ESTATE LOWN AND CORRECTING AGENCY

appears in Tokio, a place, perhaps, for bad boys and girls.

Public signs and notices are often as amusing as the shop signs. For instance, one that appears on the way up the famous Bluff at Yokohama:

IT IS FORBIDDEN TO THROW THE STONE  
A MAN IS BEING WOUNDED.

Probably in some past year a stone thrown over the bank hit a passer-by, but the man is still being wounded. At a temple door we read:

ALL VISITOR ARE NOT ALLOW TO ENTER THIS  
TEMPLE PUTTING ON THEIR SHOE.

Hence of course we took off our shoes. I copied the following from a poster on the side of a house in a little fishing-village on the shore of the Inland Sea:

TO LET GRAUND IN BEACH WHEN IF YOU LIKE I  
WILL DID AWAY FROM STREET AND WILL  
TAKEN DIRTY COTTAGE.

On mature deliberation of several savants it was decided that the owner meant to say that if he rented his lot on the beach he would move his house from the street, and also take away the "dirty cottage" that now encumbered his ground.

VICKERS's loks have obtained the highest award at the Paris Exhibition, 1900, which with twenty-one previous awards at exhibitions in all parts of the world is something of a record, as all have been obtained within the short space of three years.

## A SECRET SIN.

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### CHAPTER XVI.

LUNCHEON that day was a most uncomfortable meal.

Bernard Vansittart sat at the side of the table a picture of gloom, scarcely eating anything or saying a single word; whilst Pera, with a crimson flush on her cheeks, talked fast about any topic of general interest that came into her head, directing her whole conversation to her aunt.

Lady Hargreave looked from one to the other with an amused smile, wondering what that most objectionable young man had been after; and being determined to get rid of him, reminded Pera that they were due at the barracks at half-past four.

"I don't know if you can persuade your cousin to accompany us!" she added, a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

Pera gave a look, as much as to say, "I'm sure I shan't try;" whilst Bernard said, hastily,—

"I should not think of going to the barracks without being asked; and if I were, I have no time to spare for tennis and that sort of idleness."

"I did not know that you were such a dreadfully busy man," said Lady Hargreave, coldly. "You are more fortunate than most of the young barristers I know. But why are you down here instead of in London?"

"I was in London yesterday evening, and only arrived in Warburton this morning. I should go back straight if it weren't for Pera's father at the Gatehouse."

"Pray, don't let him weigh on your mind," from Pera, disdainfully.

"Can't help it; I don't think it right for an old man of his age to be so much alone."

"That is my business!" hotly.

"Is it?" with a sneer. "Then I wonder you don't look after it."

"Auntie, will you excuse me?" her voice quivering with anger. "My head aches fearfully, and this room is so hot."

Lady Hargreave nodded and smiled.

"Certainly, my dear. I shall go into the boudoir for an old woman's quiet siesta, and Bernard, if he can spare the time"—with ironical emphasis—"will no doubt enjoy a cigar."

Pera did not wait to see what her cousin was likely to enjoy, but made her way through the window, with her head in the air, and without deigning to cast a glance in his direction.

She gained her favourite place, and sat down on the moss-grown wall, turning her feverish cheeks to the sweet fresh air which came softly down the valley.

That Bernard, after his conduct in the morning, should dare to speak to her, filled her with surprise; but that he should presume to give her a lecture excited her indignation beyond all bounds.

As if she did not know what was best for her father! And as if anything would have induced her to leave him if he had wanted her to stay!

Sir Roger was fond of solitude, and liked nothing better than to shut himself up in the study with his books. Often when she was at home, she passed whole days without seeing him except at meals, and even then he was so abstracted that he would scarcely listen to what she had to say.

She loved the old place with all her heart; but looking back at it now from the field of her wider experience, it seemed as if her life in the Gatehouse was very cramped, with no room in it except for their two selves, with one other thrown in as a link with the outer world.

She never could feel the same again towards Bernard after his declaration of passionate love. And it made her shudder to think of him with this new mystery clinging round him like a shroud, and his eyes glowing with an almost ferocious glare.

What was his connection with Anthony Graves? And what had he done with him? Two o'clock was such an extraordinary time to transact any business except that of burglary; and she could certainly acquit him of all intention of robbing the Gatehouse. For the sake of Bertie Vyvyan she would keep her eyes wide open even if he had deserted her, and thrown himself into the arms of Eva Haughton. Yes, in the generosity of her heart, she would do her best to clear his name, even if he had decided never to ask her to bear it.

The sound of steps attracted her attention, and, looking up, she saw Bernard coming towards her, down the shady alley where the trees met over her black head.

She turned away, as if she did not see him and began pulling at a little unsightly root, which was growing in a cleft between the stones of the wall.

Not in the least discouraged, he placed himself by her side.

"When are you going back?"

"I'll trouble you not to speak to me," presenting him with a sight of her delicate little ear, whilst her eyes fixed themselves on the valley below.

He laughed hoarsely.

"For the term of our natural lives, or for the next five minutes?"

"Never again," passionately.

"Never's a long day."

"I mean it to be a long day."

"What will Sir Roger say?"

"That is my affair," with her chin in the air.

"And mine too—more mine than yours, it seems to me at present."

No answer.

"Pera, you are treating me very badly; but I know the reason. You want to get me out of the way so as to have a clear course for Vyvyan." A pause, whilst he hoped she would speak to defend herself from the accusation. As she remained stolidly silent, he went on. "But let me tell you, I shall never be out of the way," his voice vibrating with a strange excitement. "If you turn the cold shoulder on me I shall appeal to your father, and I shall stick to him whether you like it or not."

"Come, if you choose, but don't expect me to be glad to see you."

"I shall certainly come, and you will be glad to see me, because I'm your oldest friend, and not only that, your cousin, Pera," his voice softening. "Is it just to hate me because I love you too well?"

"It's your own fault," looking round for the first time with a troubled face; "you say such horrid things."

"Only when you exasperate me."

"And you look so fierce. You frighten me!"

"I never was a milk-and-water fellow. If I feel a thing at all, I feel it all through me," his eyes lighting up. "I feel as if a fire were in my heart and brain. Other men look and sigh and make tender speeches! that's not my line. I long, but with a fierce longing that is sure to be satisfied, against which a girl's weak will could no more stand than a child like you stand straight and firm in a cyclone. Good-bye, Pera, you hate me to-day, you'll love me to-morrow, and as sure there is a heaven above us," his dark eyes flashing and his cheeks white with the intensity of his emotion, "you will be my wife, before you and I go to our graves."

"Then he took up his hat, and went without trying to touch her hand, or even bending his head in sign of farewell. And she sat where he had left her, quivering with anger and fear.

With fast steps, as if urged on by some secret cause for haste, Vansittart passed through the garden without entering the house, and went down the carriage drive and into the road.

When the gate clanged behind him he stooped and drew a deep breath, staring before him with a strange intensity of purpose, as if he saw some mystery before him, which he was determined to fathom.

As far as ordinary mortals could see the road was empty, except for a beggar who came up and asked him for an alms.

Bernard started, frowned darkly on the thin

unkempt face upturned to his with a pitiful whine, and with a curse thrust the man roughly aside, then walked on at a rapid pace, though the sun was hot, and the road a cloud of dust.

The beggar looked after him, and took off his battered hat to scratch his untidy hair. "All right, mister," he said with a nod after Vansittart's retreating figure. "It's not the first time I've met you, and I'd lay a five if I had it that it won't be the last. Not that I would be for the pleasure of seeing your scowling face neither, for if I ever see a likeness to old Nick it's you." And he shuffled off with a bent back, and a pair of crooked knees, enlivened by the thought of a spice of revenge in return for an angry curse.

"Where are you, child!" exclaimed Lady Hargreave in surprise, as the question answered itself, when she turned round the corner and saw Pera still sitting, as if in a dream, on the low wall. "It is almost time to start, and you are not dressed; what are you thinking of?"

"Bernard; I can't think of anything else," looking up at her aunt with startled eyes. "I can't get him out of my head. Do you believe in the power of a vow or an oath?"

"I don't understand—please explain," poking at a tuft of dandelion with the point of a very elegant parasol.

The colour rushed into the girl's pretty face; and there was a certain hesitation in her voice.

"If a man swore that 'As sure as there was a heaven above us—you would do a thing that you hated—do you think you would do it?'"

Lady Hargreave burst out laughing.

"No, my dear, not if ten thousand men swore it! So Bernard wants to have you whether you will or no. Let it be 'No' for ever; and I defy him to marry you against your will."

"Oh, auntie, I didn't mean to tell you," putting up her hand to hide her blushes.

"It is just as well you did," with a smile that quickly faded, and left her face graver than usual. "Forewarned is forearmed, and Master Bernard shall be kept at a distance for the future. I never liked him; and if I had a choice between him and an untamed tiger I'd choose the tiger. Now go and dress, and I promise you a pleasant companion for the rest of the afternoon."

"I won't be a minute," and with a kiss dropped gently on her aunt's cheek, and a loving smile into her serious face, Pera hurried off, scarcely seeming to touch the grass as she ran quickly towards the rose-shaded verandah.

Lady Hargreave looked after her with a wistful look in her grey eyes.

"Oh Val! if I only knew!" and then she, too, moved on slowly towards the house.

## CHAPTER XVII

THE tennis-court at the back of the barracks was scorching under the rays of a quite old-fashioned sun, and only a few trees shaded the outer edge of the enclosure, the others having been cut down by a ruthless builder.

However, whether shady or not, the so-called gardens of the White Lancers were always efficiently crowded by the ladies of the neighbourhood whenever the regiment chose to issue invitations—for it is not quite an unfounded idea that the fair sex are devoted to the army.

The band was playing cheerfully on the right hand side of the garden, and opposite to it was a large marquee with the colours of the regiment draped over the opening.

It was an animated scene, and Pera's heart throbbed with excitement, as escorted by Major Prothero, and preceded by Lady Hargreave, she stepped out into the sunshine on the lawn.

Numbers of friends gathered round them—dowagers in stiff satins and lace mantles, girls in Madras muslins or clinging cashmeres, men in cool white flannels. To young and old, the party from the Grange seemed welcome; but the one whom Pera longed to see was not there, and she felt that Captain Valentine—the Apollo of the regiment—was actually a poor exchange.

He led them to chairs in the only shady nook of the place, a corner which he had carefully reserved for them from the beginning, and he fed them with strawberries and cream, laid claret-cup, and vanilla biscuits; he devoted his attention to them for as long a time as he could possibly spare from the rest of his guests.

And yet whilst the elderly lady beamed on him with affectionate smiles, the younger only listened to him with one ear, and scarcely ever gave him a glance because her eyes were always straying as if bent on making an inventory of the company.

Val was nettled by this behaviour, and went off in a huff to exercise his facile fascinations on a more appreciative subject. Wherever he went bright eyes beamed on him, and pretty girls were eager to capture him, if only for ten minutes.

Most of them preferred a talk with Captain Valentine to a game of tennis in the blazing sun. Many of them would have been willing to spend the rest of their lives in his company; and yet such is the perversity of human nature, whilst there were twenty or thirty eager to accept his homage—and a few even disposed to offer their own—he could not be content because there was one who seemed impervious to his attractions. He thought of her even when he seemed engrossed in tennis; his first look was in her direction as soon as the game was over. He felt, indeed, very cross with her, for all his comrades had been inclined to chaff him about Lady Hargreave's lovely niece—chaff which he had snubbed without a moment's loss of time; and now they would be for themselves that the girl herself was entirely heart-whole.

This was not to be borne, and he strode up to her, as determined to vanquish her indifference as he would be to get the first to a breach if he were leading a forlorn hope.

"I am sorry you are not enjoying yourself, Miss Clifford. Is anything wrong? or is anyone mistaking?"

The colour rushed into her cheeks, and he saw it, though she put up her parasol to hide it.

"Nothing is wrong, thank you. The band is delightful; those airs from the Mikado are so inspiring, and—people have been very pleasant!"

"Do you care for horses?" as a sudden thought struck him. "Would you like to go over the stables? Prothero is taking a whole bevy, and we might follow in their train. You know, in a procession, the grandest people always bring up the rear!"

"Then I hope we are grand," with a smile, "for I want to ask you a question."

His face lighted up. This was a step in the right direction.

"Wait till we are alone. I will take you to see my favourite mare whilst the others are going the round."

Most men would not have chosen the stable-yard for a private conversation; but Val knew what he was about. All stable-duty for the present was over, and the yard was clear, except for one or two grooms at the upper end near the pump, and the party of visitors, headed by the Major.

Captain Valentine led Pera to his own private and particular set of stalls; but before he pointed out the perfections of his mare he turned to her courteously, and said he was prepared to listen.

He took off his cap, and throwing one arm over Gipsy's neck, fixed his eyes on Pera's blushing face.

A smile hovered about his moustaches as he saw the pink deepening in her cheeks; but he had no pity for her embarrassment. She had made him feel as if he were of no more account than Le Mœurleur, and any sign that she felt his power was welcome.

"You remember my telling you something about my cousin and Anthony Graves?" she began, shyly.

"Perfectly."

"You did not mention it to anyone?"

His eyes opened widely.

"I didn't breathe a word. You told it me in confidence. Don't you trust me?"



"Oh, yes! yes! Only how did he hear of it?" looking intensely puzzled.

"Did he hear it?" frowning slightly.

"Yes, he was very angry. I think he said he had a letter about it from some solicitors in London."

"This looks queer," looking very grave.

"Where were we when you told me? Oh, I remember, at the Hall—by the window. Moral—Never talk of anything confidential by an open window. Miss Clifford, tell me—you never suspected me?" anxiously.

"Not for a moment; only I was so puzzled."

"And so am I. There's some dirty work somewhere. Might I talk this over with Vyvyan? He's the soul of honour."

"Pray do—only wait," putting her hand out, as if to stop him. "Bernard wouldn't like it."

"Perhaps not," drily. "I don't know who Bernard is."

"My cousin."

"Oh, that infernal cousin!" thought Valentine to himself. Aloud he said rather stiffly, "Of course, you are bound to consult his interests."

Pera flushed.

"To a certain extent I am—for the sake of auld lang syne."

"Only for the sake of auld lang syne?" he repeated, a scornful ring in his voice.

"Yes," looking straight up into his face, with honest eyes, "he's not half as nice as he used to be!"

Val was silent for some time, cogitating. It seemed to him that as to the matter of the missing money-lender, Pera must choose between her cousin and her friend. If she loved Bernard she would prefer to keep the evidence she possessed to herself; but if she liked Vyvyan the best she must naturally wish to clear him at all costs. Therefore he said, whilst twirling his mustaches reflectively,—

"If he isn't as nice as he used to be, I think Vyvyan deserves to be considered."

A swift look up into his face—then drooping lashes fell on burning cheeks.

"I do consider him. I wanted to speak to him this very afternoon."

"It is absurd to connect him with the fellow at all. It seems to me the only peg on which to hang a scrap of evidence is this: that Graves went along the same road as Vyvyan, and was never seen afterwards. The odd thing is, that Vyvyan went down that road for no apparent reason whatever, and put up at an out-of-the-way inn instead of coming back in decent time to barracks."

"Perhaps he had been annoyed," said Pera hesitatingly.

Val looked at her with attention.

"Did you treat him badly at the Gate-house?"

"No. Take off that cloth, and let me see your mare," turning the subject with adroitness, for what lover of horse-flesh can resist an allusion to his horse?

Val was not above the weakness, and discussed so eloquently about the perfections of the mare that he quite forgot his friend, till he heard Major Prothero saying to the ladies who were with him; "Vyvyan's got one of the best horses in the stable—but unfortunately he's out and taken it with him. He's plucky enough about most things, but hadn't the courage to meet so many petticoats."

"You evidently have a bad effect on him, Miss Clifford," said Captain Valentine, with a smile.

"At the Gate-house you bewilder his brain so that he doesn't know where he is going. And this morning, he was all right when he started for the Hall, but came home with a thundering headache, such a gigantic one that he was obliged to go off somewhere by himself, and couldn't even wait for the pleasure of seeing you."

"He didn't think it pleasure, evidently," in a low voice.

"Vyvyan is not a senseless idiot, any more than I am. I think it was the sight of the cousin disagreed with him—as it would with me," he added softly.

"Why! Bernard hasn't got the small-pox!" with a smile.

"I wish to Heaven he had—all over his face—so as to make him hideous," with a sudden energy.

"How can you be so cruel!" opening her eyes a little wider.

"Because I hate him like poison," still with a smile about his lips.

"You have never seen him!"

"I don't want to. I've heard of him—that's quite enough."

"What have you heard?"

He bent his head, and looked down into her eyes. "That he has stolen the prize before any of us had a chance of winning it."

It was impossible to mistake his meaning, for there was a look in his blue eyes which told so much.

Pera stepped out into the yard, her heart beating fast, a lovely blush on her cheeks, a longing in her breast that Vyvyan was there instead of Valentine.

Could it be that he had given her up because he thought the same as Val? A new hope revived her spirits, as she said, quietly, determined that there should be no mistake this time.

"It would require great courage to undertake Bernard for life. Mine would fail me. My aunt will wonder where I am. Let us go back to the garden."

"One moment, Miss Clifford, I don't want to be impertinent—has Vyvyan made a howling mistake?"

"I don't know; what do you mean?" beginning to tremble.

Val was not the man to hesitate when his own happiness might depend on a bold question.

"You are not engaged to this cousin?"

"Did Mr. Vyvyan tell you that?" with a little gasp.

"He did."

"Then—then—" her breath coming short, and panting—"he might have known better."

The tears rushed to her eyes, as she turned away her face and quickened her steps.

"That is the best news I ever heard," said Val, softly, as a great light shone in his eyes.

For the rest of the afternoon he was thoroughly content, and the general opinion of his brother-officers was that he had only to go in and win. As to himself he didn't know what he wanted, but he had made up his mind that Pera Clifford was the prettiest girl in England.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE road from Warburton to Lillingworth is justly celebrated for its beauty, with a broad stretch of grass on either side shaded by large beech-trees, which occasionally extends into a picturesque common with Scotch firs here and there amongst the lighter green.

The trees were in their fullest beauty as Bertie Vyvyan rode towards Lillingworth, his heart brimming over with a bitter sense of wrong.

Only the other night he had almost fancied that Bernard Vansittart's statement that he was engaged to Pera Clifford was but a lie. The expression in her lovely eyes as he called her by her Christian name once more, had made his heart beat thunderingly in his ears, and if they had not been interrupted he could almost have hoped that all would have been made right between them.

And then, that very morning he had seen enough with his own eyes to confirm Vansittart's statement, for Pera was as proud as she was pure, and was not likely to let anyone touch her lips but the man whose wife she had promised to be.

It was a detestable world, he decided, in spite of the wild flowers growing under his horse's hoofs; in spite of the myriad green leaves shading his head, the cloudless sky above, and the wealth of sunshine bathing in golden splendour both valley and wooded hill.

There is often a cloud on our own hearts which

prevents us from seeing the sunshine about us, and there is no wind, no kindly breath of air to take it away.

Vyvyan rode on through the village of Lillingworth scattered up hill and downhill, as if planned by a mischievous child.

Just beyond the houses he came in sight of a little stream which runs across the road and under a small bridge which had been set up for the convenience of pedestrians.

The water is shaded by tall trees, and a little further on down the road there is a picturesque bank with here and there a massive ivy grown stone, part of the old wall which once bounded the tilt-yard. The ruins themselves were hidden from view behind the mass of foliage.

Lucy Mitford happened to be crossing the bridge with a little golden-haired child by her side, as the young officer rode up.

She walked along with a listless step and a drooping head, as if she had no interest in anything about her; but the child, attracted by the sound of horse's hoofs, looked round and gave a little shout of delight as the thoroughbred stood up on its hind legs, and refused to wash its hoofs.

Lucy went on, not knowing that the child had stayed behind and was rooted to the spot, with his curly head thrust under the single wooden rail which guarded the bridge.

Rake executed a sort of war-dance on the road, but Vyvyan was determined not to be beaten and thrashed him vigorously, then turning him sharp round sent him through the water at a hard gallop.

Amidst the noise of the water which splashed up to his hat, he heard a cry, and saw a woman running back towards the bridge, throwing up her hands as if in horror.

As soon as he could rein in his horse he rode back to see what had happened.

She was kneeling down on the bridge, her arms extended as far as she could stretch, her face perfectly convulsed with terror, as she cried,—

"Tony! Tony! oh, Heaven! he'll be drowned!"

Bertie took in the situation at a glance.

He saw that the child must have fallen into the water and, as there was no sign of him, been carried by the stream beyond the bridge.

In a moment he had dismounted, and was fastening the bridle to a gate-post. The next he was striding up the stream to where a small red frock was floating before him.

The lost child was soon caught, and he came back with the little fellow in his arms.

"Where do you live? I'll carry him to your house."

Lucy pointed up a green lane which skirted the tilt-yard, and bent over her boy, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"He won't be a bit the worse for it," said Vyvyan kindly, as he walked on in the direction of the cottage with the dripping child still resting, with all his fun gone out of him, in his rescuer's arms.

"Blessings on you, sir," sobbed Mrs. Mitford.

"If he had been taken I—I don't know what would have become of me. What with his father being missing and all, it must have been the death of me."

"What has become of his father?" as he shifted his burden to his other arm.

"Ah! If you could only tell me!" turning her pale face towards the young soldier, who was struck by the beauty of her large dark eyes.

"He wrote and told me he was coming to me on the night of the third of June, and I've never had a word from him, nor seen sight of him since. They've got it about on all the palings. So somebody's took it up; but as far as I can hear, all those advertisements are money thrown away, for there's never been an answer either to them or to me."

"You are not the wife of Anthony Graves?"

Vyvyan asked in surprise, struck by her allusion to the bills which met his eye on every side.

"I am, sir," with a deep sigh, "though no one guessed it. I kept the secret well because he told me to, but now that he's gone, nothing matters—nothing!"

"You've got your child still," smiling down



"I AM SORRY YOU ARE NOT ENJOYING YOURSELF, MISS CLIFFORD," SAID CAPTAIN VALENTINE.

quite tenderly at the little pale face so near his own.

"Ah, the darling!" putting out a thin hand to stroke the child's wet hair. "The blessing of Heaven be on you, sir, for giving him back to me! I couldn't have borne to lose him too."

"But about your husband? I knew him once; he was a kind friend to me."

"You don't say so, sir! He had the kindest heart in the world, though folks used to say so different. You can't help me to find out anything about him!"

"I am afraid not, though I believe he was down here that very night he spoke of."

"Down here! Well, I never!" excitedly. "I knew he was expected by others as well as myself, but I didn't think he had ever come."

"By others!" in surprise.

"Yes, sir. He sent me a letter which he had had from a gentleman up there at the Gatehouse," with a nod of her head towards the Castle, "asking him to come there so late as two in the morning. He put the note inside my letter, and said, 'You see, Lucy, I can't be with you over early. But don't sit up for me. It will be like a surprise to find me there in the morning.' I did sit up—it wasn't likely I shouldn't—but he never came, though I waited for him, and heard every hour strike as the night went by."

"Do you remember whom the letter was from?" he interest keenly alive.

"There was only a B.V. at the end of it, but I hear the gentleman at the Gatehouse has the name of Clifford."

"Yes; but there is a Mr. Bernard Vansittart, who is more likely to know about your husband than Sir Roger. He comes down pretty often, and I fancy he may be there to-day. Take my advice and ask him what has become of your husband, but don't let him have the letter—it may be wanted. Look him straight in the face, and ask him when he last saw him."

"What for—sir," beginning to tremble, "you don't think he's done him any harm!"

"I think he has helped him to get out of the way."

"Then you are sure he's alive!" her voice quivering with eagerness.

"Not sure, but I think it's probable. Why did he keep his marriage dark?"

Lucy's face flushed.

"I wasn't his equal, and the ladies and gentlemen amongst whom he went would have cried shame on him. He wouldn't call me Mrs. Graves, but he was good to me, and the child he loved and doted on," the tears running down her cheeks.

Then she threw open a garden-gate belonging to a low, neatly-thatched cottage, and holding out her arms eagerly for the child, said,—

"This is my home, sir. I needn't trouble you any further."

"The youngster had better have a hot bath before you put him to bed, and then his wetting will do him no harm."

"Thank you, sir, he shall," as she pressed her boy to her breast. "You won't step in and dry yourself a bit!"

"I daren't leave my horse any longer. Don't forget to go to Mr. Vansittart," as his eye took in a critical survey of the picturesque nest in which the money-lender had hidden his wife and child.

It seemed to have nothing in keeping with Anthony Graves, who was one of the vulgarlest, most prosaic men he had ever seen.

He raised his hat and nodded a farewell in answer to the mother's repeated thanks, but as soon as she had put the child on a sofa, she ran back to grasp him by the hand, whilst tears of gratitude streamed down her cheeks.

"I'll go to the Gatehouse this evening, sir, if I can get a neighbour to sit with my boy. Maybe you've done me a double service. You've saved my child, and you may have helped me to find my husband."

"I should be very glad if I had. I shall look in upon you some day before long, Mrs. Graves."

"Mistford, sir," looking round as if she were afraid of being heard. "That is his real name, though he took the other when he went into business. It's sometimes convenient to have two."

"Yes—for scamps," he mentally added, as he went back to where Rake was standing, and tossing his head in feverish unrest.

He patted his beautiful neck soothingly, and getting across his back, rode up the road just to have a look at the house of his faithless love.

The friled towers were bathed in sunshine, and the whole place had a slumberous look about it, grand and peaceful, all its excitement, haste, and turmoil, buried with the bones of the great and the brave in the graves of the past.

The dogs in the kennels at the back of the house began to bark, the peacock gave a shrill scream, and Vyvyan turned his horse's head with a sigh. If Pera were his own Pera still, how different his feelings would have been! He would have gone in to see how Sir Roger was, in hopes of gladdening his daughter with a good report, and being rewarded by one of her sweetest smiles. Now the best thing he could do was to give the Gatehouse a wide berth, and avoid its young mistress as he would the plague.

As he rode off, amidst the flickering lights and shadows, Bernard Vansittart, who had been watching him from behind a tall holly just inside the gates, looked after him, his dark eyes glowing with an expression of murderous hate.

"Your time will soon come," he muttered, and went slowly towards the ruins.

(To be continued.)

MEAT has been preserved in a frozen state for thirty years, and found perfectly eatable at the end of that time.





"CAN YOU GIVE ME ANY NEWS OF JOYCE, SIR?" LUCY ASKED, EAGERLY.

## THE MISTRESS OF LYNWOOD.

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### CHAPTER XLII.

WHATEVER may have been the detective's private impressions with regard to Nathalie's guilt in the first instance they were entirely in her favour after his interview with her, and he was as convinced of her innocence as Hugh himself.

Luckily she liked his manner, and felt a certain amount of confidence engendered by it; and, as a consequence, she was very open, and told him all there was to tell without a shadow of reserve.

"And you entertain no suspicions of your maid?" said Healy, after a very exhaustive conversation.

"No; not the least in the world. In fact, I have been accustomed to regard her as rather a superior sort of personage, for she has somewhat held herself aloof from the other servants."

"Were her habits at all peculiar?"

"No, except that she was very fond of solitude, and would often wander about in the evenings."

"Where did she 'wander'?"

"Very often in the plantation."

The detective pricked up his ears.

"Can you remember on what occasions you have seen her there?"

Nathalie pondered for a few minutes.

"I recollect seeing her there twice, and each time I had been with Mr. Farquhar. I can fix the date of the one occasion, for it was the night someone came in my room and cut my wrist."

"What is that? Pray tell me all the particulars."

Nathalie did so, the detective listening very carefully.

"Is Warren near-sighted? I ask because I observe she wears spectacles," he said, as she concluded.

"She says she is, but when she came to me first she wore no spectacles."

"In what way did you engage her?"

"I advertised, and she answered the advertisement."

"I suppose she sent references?"

"Yes, one was from a lady of title, and the other from someone in London. They are both in my desk, of which I will give you the key if you like."

"Thank you; I think I had better examine them. Did Warren write from London?"

"Yes, but I forget the address; however, you will find it on her letter, which is with the references."

Nathalie was anxious to know if any news had been heard of her brother, and was answered by Hugh in the negative. The only result of the inquiries made showed that the man and woman who had got into the cab outside the lodge-gates were not Lionel and Adrienne.

"I will make inquiries," said Healy. "I am interested in the affair myself, and shall no doubt be able to learn something ere long."

After leaving Nathalie, he went to the police-station, where he was allowed to see the pistol, and then he found that the cartridge case he picked up fitted perfectly, and had undoubtedly been used in it.

"I am quite satisfied with my day's work," he said to Hugh, as they were driving home. The latter did not feel by any means so complacent; as a matter of fact, each hour that passed only increased his anxiety, for it brought a fuller comprehension of Nathalie's peril, and his own helplessness.

Healy was very thoughtful until they pulled up in front of King's Lane, where they were just in time to see Isabel Farquhar come down the steps on her way to the carriage in waiting for her. Hugh came forward and offered his hand to assist her in, but she declined his help.

"Are you going to town?" he asked.

"No, I shall have to give evidence before the

magistrates, so my presence is required in W— and I shall stay at an hotel there until after the examination is over. Then I shall go to town, where I shall remain until I have to give evidence at the Assizes."

"You do not know that there will be a trial," he said, conscious of the sting in her words.

"Oh, yes, I am sure of it. There can be no doubt in the minds of sensible people that Nathalie Egerton is a murderess," she responded, and then got into the carriage and was driven off.

Healy looked after her with raised eyebrows. "There goes a Tartar," he remarked. "I shouldn't care to have such a woman for a wife."

And Hugh mentally echoed this opinion.

The detective, after he had had some refreshment, proceeded to Nathalie's room, and there examined the letters she had referred to as having been received from Warren; they were addressed from "No. 5, Barton-street, Kentish Town," and the references enclosed were from the Countess of D—, Park-lane, and from a Mrs. Selby, Camden-road.

He looked at his watch, found there was yet time to telegraph, and despatched a message to the former, which was answered in less than an hour.

The answer ran thus:—

"The Countess of D— knows nothing whatever of the person calling herself Eliza Warren, whose name she has not heard before to-day. She certainly never gave a reference to such a person."

"Ah! then the reference was a forgery; I thought so," remarked the detective, putting the telegram away in his note-book. "As for the other one, Mrs. Selby may be a friend of her own, so I don't think I will risk an application to her. So far, so good."

He spent the rest of the evening wandering about the house, and making all sorts of inquiries from the servants, every one of whom he questioned in their turn. They were inclined to think

him rather mad, for he asked them about trivial things that, they decided, could certainly have no bearing on the murder, and was most patient in listening to the expression of their own opinion on the subject.

Without pointedly making her the ostensible object of his queries, he yet contrived to find out all he wanted to know concerning Warren, which was to the effect that she was not popular, as she declined to associate with the other servants, and was looked upon as rather "uncanny" by the generality.

He asked about her dresses too, and was informed that she always wore black, but so did most of the other maids in the afternoon, so she was not singular in that respect.

When bedtime arrived, Mr. Egerton came into the detective's room to see if he required anything.

"I am all right, thank you sir," said Healey. "I have no intention of going to bed to-night."

"Indeed! Why do you purpose sitting up?"

"I can't explain my reasons now, sir,—I may perhaps do so later on."

The Squire did not press him, but went downstairs again, where Hugh was awaiting him. The relations between the two men had immediately assumed a friendly nature, for Mr. Egerton felt that no one would exert himself so much on Nathalie's behalf as the young artist, and therefore everything that had formerly passed between them was tacitly ignored on both sides, and Hugh dropped into the place Lionel would have occupied had he been there.

The Squire spoke of his son that night.

"Surely, wherever he may have taken that misguided young woman, he will hear news of his sister's position, and will return," he said, for like the rest of the world, he had no doubt that Adrienne's disappearance meant an elopement. Nathalie was the only person who kept up a belief in Lionel's honour and Lady Lynwood's purity.

Healy's room was—at his own request—on the same floor as that occupied by Warren, and opened into the same passage. After the household had retired he crept very cautiously to her door, and peeped through the keyhole. She was sitting at a table, with her back to him, and engaged in sewing, but of what description her work was it was impossible to tell.

The detective watched for about half an hour, and then returned to his own apartment, where he sat at a table, engaged in writing, but with the door ajar, so that he might hear any sound.

Nothing, however, broke the silence, and by-and-by he again went to Warren's door.

The light was out now—apparently she had retired.

Healy hesitated, then gently turned the handle and finding the door was not locked, stepped inside the room.

It was empty.

"By Jove! she must be quiet in her movements for me not to have heard her!" he muttered, with some admiration, and then he turned the light of his lantern on a dress hanging up behind the door. It was a black alpaca, with a small pattern on it, and exactly matched the fragment he had picked up from the tree, but it seemed nearly new, and there was not a hole anywhere visible—not even a darn. Healy particularly examined the sleeves, but they were perfect.

Having done this, he drew the slide of his lantern, and cautiously went out into the passage, closing the door behind him, and then he descended the stairs into the servants' hall.

Hardly had he reached it before the door was pushed open from the outside, and Warren came in, her face and head muffled in the black folds of a shawl. She proceeded to draw the bolts very quietly, and just as she had concluded this operation the detective stepped forth, and grasped her arm, while he let the rays of his lantern fall full on her face.

She did not move or utter a cry, though a sharp gasp came from her throat, and Healy felt a certain admiration for her courage.

"What have you been doing outside at this time of night?" he said.

"Loose me, and I will tell you," she responded, quietly, shaking herself free from his clasp. Then she continued, in the same tone, "I could not sleep and was looking through my window, and a little locket I always wear round my neck fell down on the gravel below so I came to look for it."

"And have you found it?"

"No, it must have got lodged in the crevices or something, for I can't see it anywhere. I must look again in the daylight."

She spoke in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone that almost vouched for what she said being the truth, and on Healy taking his hand from her arm, wished him "good-night," and went upstairs again as if looking for lockets at one o'clock in the morning were the most ordinary thing in the world.

Healy waited a few minutes, then went outside and looked on the gravel to see if it were possible to trace her footsteps, but this was more than even he could do, for there had been no rain for two days, and the earth was too dry to carry prints in spite of the night dew.

"Where can she have been?" he muttered, in deep chagrin that he had not heard her leave her room and followed her. "I would give ten pounds to find out all she has done to-night. What a fool I was not to have kept my ears open wider!"

Self-reproaches were useless, however, and he went back to his own apartment, and threw himself on the bed.

"It's no good watching any longer now," he said, savagely. "She won't be up to any more mischief to-night, for whatever was the task she undertook I could see by her manner that she had succeeded in it. Ah! well, I must hope for better luck to-morrow."

And he went to sleep and dreamt he was administering a sound thrashing to Mr. Ptness Hyam, while his nephew Alfred looked on with deep satisfaction and encouraged him.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

It is now time to return to Lionel and Adrienne, whom we left entering the subterranean passage on the evening of Farquhar's murder.

The girl entered, with all the zest of youth, into the spirit of the undertaking, and her silvery laughter rang out gaily through the stone cave, and was echoed back from the low roof.

Lionel felt himself exhilarated by the mere sound of it.

"Suppose the gipsy's prediction should really be verified," she said, "and you should find your great-uncle's wealth?"

"I do not think it by any means improbable. It is quite clear to me that this passage has been made use of within a comparatively recent date—say fifty years. Otherwise I should have had much more difficulty in opening the door than I had. The mystery is, how it has remained so long a secret," responded Lionel.

In fact, the retreat was far from being as close and damp as might have been anticipated, and it had evidently been built for something more than a passage, as it increased in width and height as it proceeded.

Doubtless it had been used, years ago, by smugglers as a hiding-place for their goods, in the days when gentlemen winked at such unlawful deeds, and, as the price of their silence, were always provided with brandy that was none the worse because duty had never been paid on it.

"Doesn't it remind you of the old song of the 'Mistletoe Bough'?" said Adrienne, presently, as she followed him, and looked curiously at the walls, on whose dampness the light he carried shone in partial rays. "Certainly this is not an oaken chest, whose lids shut with a spring, but if one is gifted with imagination, one can see the resemblance."

"If one is gifted with imagination one can see

anything one chooses," he answered, laughing, and Adrienne continued,—

"I think Lionel and his 'long-lost bride' were my favourite hero and heroine in my childhood. I used to believe implicitly in their tragic fate, and I hardly knew which to pity most, the bride who died or the bridegroom who lived."

"The latter," exclaimed Lionel, quickly; "her sufferings were soon over, but his span themselves out into long years."

"That is true; but think of the horror of such a fate as being locked in any place and suffocated!"

Lionel glanced back rather uneasily, but the door was still open, as he could see from the light that lay behind them, so he measured himself.

"You have chosen rather a melancholy theme," he observed, with a smile.

"Have I? I always speak out just what happens to be in my mind when I am with you; I have to think before I speak when talking to other people."

Lionel flushed scarlet at this naive confession, and hurried on until they came to a door, which barred their progress.

There were locks and bolts in plenty on this door, but none of them were fastened; indeed, a huge key, yellow with rust, still stood in the lock, but it was evidently many years since it had been turned.

"The chamber of horrors!" exclaimed Egerton, gaily, pausing in front of it. "I wonder what we shall find inside. Do you think you dare venture in?"

"I don't know. Is anything very dreadful likely to meet our gaze?"

"Spiders for certain, and, perhaps, a rat. I do not think we need fear anything else, only one always likes to pause on the brink of a mystery, and revel in expectations that will probably be disappointed. However, here goes!"

He pushed open the door, and they found themselves in a small stone chamber, destitute of window, and having in one corner a sort of stone receptacle built into the wall. The air was heavier here than in the passage, the latter being much better ventilated; a sort of stime, produced by damp, covered the walls, from which a sickly, noisome odour arose.

"We had better not go any farther; it smells unwholesome," said Lionel, but his companion would not hear of turning back.

"It would be very cowardly now we have come so far," she declared. "Beside, I am really curious to see all there is to be seen, and I have a flask of eau de Cologne in my pocket, which will preserve me against bad odours."

She poured some on her handkerchief, and then offered the scent to her companion. He refused it, with a smiling shake of the head.

"I am not a delicate lady, and my senses are hardened," he said, holding the lantern above his head, so that its rays might be scattered over the cell, for cell it assuredly had been, and one shuddered to think of the hapless prisoners who had probably been incarcerated there; doomed to linger out a miserable existence until a welcome death released them.

When we nineteenth-century people talk of the "good old days," and feel inclined to regret them, we ignore the barbarism that existed, the cruelties that were practised, the despotism that prevailed, and was all-powerful. Methinks we have the pull, after all, in spite of our steam-engines and electricity—perhaps, because of them. At all events, we are not liable to be seized and shut up in dungeons all our lives because we happened to have displeased our feudal lords, or to be bricked up in walls in order to make room for some benevolent relative who has cast envious eyes on our possessions. And this is something by way of compensation for paying taxes.

The lantern was only a small one, and consequently lighted but a small portion of the chamber, so, still holding it up, Lionel advanced to the corner, where, as has already been said, was a sort of cupboard. In this stood an oaken box, strongly bound with iron.

"I wonder what it contains!" exclaimed



Adrienne, who had followed and peeped over his shoulder. "Is it open?"

"No," answered Lionel.

He tried to raise it, but it was very heavy, almost too heavy for him to move, certainly too heavy to carry.

"Suppose," whispered his companion, in great excitement, "suppose this should prove to be the buried treasure!"

The same thought had already struck Lionel, and his heart was beating rather quickly, but he would not allow himself to hope too much, for fear of a disappointment.

"More likely it is full of stones!" he answered, lightly; but all the same, he felt it would be impossible to go away without making sure. So he took from his pocket a strong chisel with which he had provided himself and tried to force open the lid.

After awhile it yielded, although not without some difficulty, for the lock had evidently been an unusually strong one before attacked by the rust that had accumulated during many years. Then he raised the lid, while Adrienne watched his movements with breathless interest, standing on tiptoe so as to see better.

A little cry broke from her lips as the light fell on the contents of the box; for lo! their wildest expectations were exceeded, and they beheld what looked like a mine of untold wealth, golden guineas gleaming up through the darkness in apparently countless profusion.

Yes, Rebecca had been right; for here was the treasure of which she had spoken, and it had fallen to Lionel's lot to discover it.

There would be no more money difficulties for his father—no more constant studying of account-books, so as to see how best to make both ends meet. All that was over, and golden vistas of untold wealth opened before the young man's excited vision, as he saw in front of him the money hidden away by his ancestor—for that this was the result of Cyrus Egerton's miserly life, he had no doubt.

Wild ideas flashed through his brain. Should he be in time to save his sister from the marriage that he felt was hateful to her, and that he suspected she had promised to undertake for the sake of Farquhar's riches?

His attention was recalled by the voice of Adrienne.

"Is it not like an Arabian night!" she exclaimed; "I can hardly believe that I am not dreaming, or that this is not fairy gold, which will vanish when I touch it."

"Try it, and see," advised her companion. She lifted a few gold pieces, and let them slip through her fingers; as they fell on the others a metallic sound rang through the chamber, and told the quality of the metal.

"Why, you will be a millionaire!"

"My father will," he responded, "for I suppose no one will dispute his right to this treasure-trove. But I believe such unexpected finds belong to those who discover them, and if so, you have as much right as anyone to the money."

"I waive my claim in your favour," she said, blithely, for her spirits were higher than they had been for a long time. "But what shall you do about the chest? It is too heavy for you to take away."

"Yes, I must leave it here, and get someone to help me carry it into the house. I suppose," laughing, "as it has been safe for so many years, it will be safe for another night."

"I don't know. If I were you, I should not be satisfied until I had it at King's Dene."

"Then we will return at once and get assistance. I expect you have had about enough of this subterranean adventure."

She shook her head, declaring she had enjoyed it immensely, and they were just on the point of leaving the cell when Lionel's attention became attracted by a ghostly object in the corner behind the door—nothing more nor less than a human skeleton, whose bones gleamed whitely in the light.

Instantly he comprehended that these must be the remains of Cyrus Egerton himself, who had made use of this cell as a hiding-place for his wealth, and while visiting it had been met by that

grim King of Terrors that all his gold was powerless to bribe.

Adrienne's eyes fell on the skeleton at the same moment, and a terrified scream broke from her lips, waking the hollow echoes of the passage.

"Come away, Lady Lynwood—do not look again," urged Lionel, taking hold of her arm, and leading her from the cell, and back along the passage towards the aperture by which they had effected an entrance.

To his surprise he found it closed.

He released Adrienne, and endeavoured to find the spring, but without success, and then came the conviction that it only acted from the outside.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Adrienne.

"Cannot you open the panel?"

"No, but I have hardly tried yet," he responded in a reassuring tone, as he took out his chisel, and prepared to work with it. "Do you mind holding the lantern for me?"

She took it, but her hand trembled so much from her recent shock that it slipped from her fingers, and became extinguished in the fall, thus leaving them in total darkness.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" she exclaimed, penitently. "Have you any matches with you?"

Lionel felt in his pockets and found to his utter dismay that he had not even his fuses box.

The situation was growing embarrassing, but he tried to console Adrienne's vexation at the accident, and began to work with his chisel.

Naturally his efforts were of no avail, for the darkness was so complete that he could not even see his hand before him, and after half-an-hour's fruitless toil he said,—

"There must be a door at the other end of the passage, leading into King's Dene—let us go and find it."

He groped about until he caught hold of her arm, and then he found what he had before suspected—that she was trembling violently.

"I am afraid you are very much terrified," he said, with an accent of keenest self-reproach. "I shall never forgive myself for having let you come here."

"It was not your fault," she answered quickly, "I insisted on coming myself."

"Don't be more alarmed than you can help," he whispered, soothingly. "We shall get out before long, and then you will laugh at this adventure."

She said nothing, and they groped their way along the passage, until they came to a door which barred their progress, and on which all Lionel's wrenchings had not the slightest effect.

After some time spent in trying to force it open, he desisted in despair, and took Adrienne's hand, with the intention of trying to console her. It was as cold as ice.

"Mr. Egerton," she said, her fingers closing convulsively round his, "if we cannot open either of these doors, I do not think there is much chance of anyone thinking of this as a possible retreat, and rescuing us, is there?"

He did not reply; a deadly fear had assailed him of something too terrible to put into words. But he dared not speak of it to her, and, on the other hand, his lips refused to frame a lie.

"You need not be afraid of telling me the truth," she continued, earnestly. "I do not think I am a coward."

"I know you are not."

"Well, then, are we not in danger of not being able to get away from here?"

A groan escaped his lips.

"Oh, Adrienne, what can I say to you!" he cried, in a burst of agony, and unconscious of the familiarity with which he addressed her; "I would give ten—nay, twenty years of my life not to have you with me at this present moment; my whole fear and anxiety are on your behalf."

"I am sure of it," she returned, softly, "but believe me, I do not blame you—how can I?"

"I ought to have known better than let you run the least shadow of risk."

"But you did not know there was any risk," she urged; "if you had thought so I am quite sure you would not have let me come."

"Heaven knows I would not!"

By this time a full understanding of their peril had come upon him. He saw little hope of forcing open either exit, and the thickness of the masonry forbade any chance of the loudest cries being heard outside, while it was pretty certain the secret of the passage that had been kept for so many years would not be guessed now.

He was sufficiently versed in the ways of the world to know what people would say with regard to their absence, and he pictured Otho Lynwood's triumph and Sir Ralph's despair when the news reached him. Strange to say, as he thought of the officer, an idea of what had really happened occurred to him, and on the impulse of the moment, he uttered it aloud,—

"I should not be at all surprised if we did not owe our present position to the good offices of your husband's nephew," he remarked, bitterly.

"What—Otho?"

"Yes. If he saw us enter, by any chance, he would be likely to close the aperture so as to prevent our escaping—at all events, for some time."

The more he thought over this idea the more probable it seemed, and it brought with it a glimmer of hope, for, unscrupulous as Otho was, Lionel did not think him bad enough to condemn two people to the awful doom of being buried alive, even though it was to his interest that they should be got rid of. He rather inclined to the belief that the soldier intended shutting them up for a day or two, in order to ruin Adrienne's reputation in the eyes of her husband, and that having achieved his object, he would then release them.

But he could not say this to Lady Lynwood, and so he was forced to content himself with such vague expressions of comfort as occurred to him.

"Do not despair," he said; "our case is not hopeless, although, I confess, it is very disagreeable. You are very cold, aren't you?"

"Rather," she assented, for the atmosphere in those damp walls was peculiarly chill.

He took off his coat and wrapped it round her, in spite of her remonstrances, and then found his way to the cell where they had discovered the treasure, and after taking out a good deal of the gold, and depositing it on the floor, so as to lighten the box, he carried it back, and made Adrienne sit down upon it.

"What a moral!" he thought to himself; "this gold for whose sake men toil and slave, and pine for—of what avail is it now to either of us!"

And then he fell to wondering whether in the years to come someone might light upon the secret passage, and, exploring it, find their bones, as they had found Cyrus Egerton's.

At all events, he would not be parted from the woman he loved—life had separated them, but in death they would be together!

Presently, as might be expected, this insolation grew intolerable, and he began his task of hewing at the door with his chisel over again, but now another misfortune befell him, for the blade of the tool, having too much strain put upon it, snapped off in the middle, and thus prevented his continuing.

"I wonder how long we have been here!" said Adrienne, when he came back.

"I can tell you, for I have a repeater with me," he returned, "it is now half-past eleven, so we have been here nearly three hours."

"Don't leave me again!" she implored hysterically, fancying he was going away; "I shall go mad if I am left alone."

He knelt down at her side, and, all in a minute, her self-control deserted her, and she let her head fall on his shoulder, while her whole slender frame was shaken by a storm of sobs. He did not attempt to check them; indeed, he thought it better that her emotion should have its natural vent, but he smoothed back the hair from her temples with gentlest, tenderest touches, mur-

morning the while involuntary terms of endearment—that, however, fell upon deaf ears, for Adrienne was too agitated to be conscious of what he was saying.

Presently she grew calmer.

"I am sorry I gave way like that," she said; "but I could not help it. I will be brave now, or try to be."

"Do you think you could manage to go to sleep for a little while, resting your head on me thus?" suggested Lionel. "Perhaps, when morning comes, daylight will force its way in through some chink or cranny, and I may be able to do something towards our release."

"Do you think it likely?" she exclaimed, catching at the hope with the eagerness of a drowning man trying to save himself by a floating straw.

"I think it very likely," he returned, infusing as much confidence as he could into his voice, a confidence he was very far from feeling.

"And you will not leave me in the meantime?"

"No; of that you may be sure."

Satisfied on this point, she again rested her head on his shoulder, with the confidence of a trusting child, and though sleep did not come to her, Lionel's close proximity kept her from growing as cold as she had been before, and, at the same time, brought with it a sense of comfort, even under those terrible circumstances.

And so the hours wore on.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

VERY early in the morning the detective went into Hugh Cleveland's room, and gave him certain instructions, which the artist promised faithfully to obey, after which he had a hasty breakfast, and was driven to W— station, where he caught the first train for town, and arrived at Paddington a little after nine o'clock.

He took a hansom, and was driven to No. 5, Barton-street, Kentish-town, a small and dirty-looking house, in a small and dirty-looking row.

Then he dismissed the cab, and knocked at the door, which was opened by a slatternly-looking woman, whose dress was held together by pins, and who carried a baby in her arms.

"Did you want to see the apartments, sir?" she exclaimed, without giving him time to speak. "Please to come in, sir, and I'll show 'em to you, and I'm sure you'll be pleased with 'em, for nicer rooms for the money it would be impossible to have."

The detective did not interrupt this flow of eloquence, but followed her into a small "parlour," which was certainly cleaner-looking than her own appearance would have warranted one in expecting.

This effect may have been due to a quantity of crochets antimacassars, that had been washed the day before, and were spread over the backs of all the chairs, looking very stiff if not exactly elegant.

The landlady was beginning to enumerate a long list of the advantages to be enjoyed by any one fortunate enough to secure the rooms, when she was cut short by her visitor.

"I am not looking for apartments, I am simply come to ask you a few questions about a lodger who was staying here; but," he added, significantly, as he noticed how her face fell, "I will make it worth your while to answer those questions. First of all, you had a young woman here named Edith Warren?"

"Mrs. Warren? Yes."

"When did she come?"

"Let me see—it was just after baby was vaccinated, and while Anna-Maria was down with the measles—that would be about three months ago," said the woman, after a pause of consideration.

"And when did she leave?"

"Oh! she only stopped three weeks or a month. I told her I wouldn't have taken her in at all if I'd known she was just going to make a convenience of me like that," with a toss of the head, that intimated Warren had not been a particular favourite of her landlady's.

"Now, Mrs.—," began the detective, indignantly.

"Jones, sir!" she said, flinging up the blank. "Thank you. Well, now, Mrs. Jones, I want you to tell me all you know about this Mrs. or Miss Warren, and then I shall hope to be allowed to present this," holding up a sovereign, "to that pretty little baby of yours."

The woman's eyes sparkled greedily at the sight of the gold. She wanted no further persuasion.

"I have not very much to tell, sir, but what I know you are welcome to," she said. "Mrs. Warren came knocking at the door one day, and took the upstairs room—which is a sitting and bedroom combined—at five shillings a week. She didn't give references, but paid a week's rent in advance, and that did as well. She was very quiet and sulky, I thought, and said she was going to earn her living as a dressmaker, but after she had been here a little more than a couple of weeks, she gave notice she was going to leave, and leave she did."

"Did she ever have any visitors?"

"No, sir, not one."

"Or letters?"

"Well, at first she had no letters at all, but the week before she gave notice one or two came for her. The fact was she had answered an advertisement she saw in the paper for a maid."

"How do you know that?" interrupting.

"Because she told me; and she said she had lost one of her references, and the lady what had given it her had gone abroad, so she asked me if she could refer her future mistress to a sister of mine that lives in the Camden-road as a housekeeper to a gentleman named Salby, and I told her she could."

"I suppose she made it worth your sister's while to answer the application?"

"Well, sir," shamefacedly, "she treated me and my sister to the theatre one night, and, after all, it was not much to do for a body. When my sister got the letter from the young lady—a Miss Nathalie Egerton it was, because I remember thinking to myself what a pretty name, and I decided to have my next christened the same—well, when my sister got the letter she brought it here, and Miss Warren wrote the answer herself."

"Indeed! What luggage had your lodger with her?"

"Only one small trunk and a bandbox."

"And I suppose she kept the trunk locked?"

"Yes, sir, she was always careful about that."

"But," said the detective, fixing his keen, pale eyes on his companion, "you may have felt some curiosity as to its contents, and it is not possible that one day, when your lodger was out of the way, you took the opportunity of looking inside."

A dark red came into Mrs. Jones's face, and told Healy he was correct in his surmise.

"I don't blame you," he added, with easy cordiality. "Very likely I myself should have done the same thing if I had been similarly situated. Now tell me what the trunk contained."

But Mrs. Jones wished to clear her character before giving the required information.

"My motive for looking in the box was to make sure she was quite respectable," she said, with difficulty; "you see I had no references with her, and I am bound to be very careful."

"Of course you are. What did you discover?"

"Nothing!" exclaimed the woman, with an accent of disappointment. "There wasn't a letter, or envelope, or a scrap of paper of any sort—the only thing besides clothing was a pistol."

"A pistol! What sort of a pistol?"

"A pretty, silver-mounted one, with a lot of work about it—made more for show than use, I think."

"Do you remember if there were any initials on it?" asked the detective.

"Yes, there were, but they weren't Mrs.

Warren's, for I remember noticing that at the time."

"Were they the letters 'G. F.'?"

"Mrs. Jones shook her head."

"I really couldn't tell you, sir, for I have quite forgotten, but I know there were two initials of some kind."

"And you think you would recognize the pistol again, if you saw it?"

"Oh, yes; I am pretty sure I should, for it was quite different to anything I had seen before, and that made me notice it so much. Besides, I thought it rather a strange thing for her to have."

"Now, Mrs. Jones, if I may ask a delicate question—how did you contrive to open that trunk?"

"I found a key on an old bunch that fitted it; but before she went away Mrs. Warren had the lock taken off and a fresh one put on—a new patent one I think."

Healy was thoughtful for a few minutes.

"You can tell me nothing more!" he said, at length.

"No, sir, for there is nothing to tell."

"You do not know where Mrs. Warren lived before she came here?"

"It was in the country, I believe, but I have no idea where, for she was that close about her own affairs that there was never any chance of finding out anything about her," in an injured tone.

"She did not leave anything behind—any envelopes, or papers, for instance?"

"Not a scrap. The only thing that was left was an old bandbox, and she didn't take that just because it was too rickety to be of any use."

"And where is that now?"

"Upstairs in my bedroom. I put my winter bonnet in it, and tied it round with a handkerchief, to prevent it from falling to pieces."

"I should like to see it if you don't mind."

Mrs. Jones looked surprised at the request, but left the room, presently returning with the bandbox in her hand. It was an ordinary-looking blue one, the name of the shop from whence it came having been torn off, and no mark upon it save a railway label—King's Cross.

The detective examined it closely, then said,—

"I will trouble you for a little hot water, please."

Mrs. Jones brought it in a teacup, and watched him with the utmost curiosity as he dabbed some on the label with his handkerchief. She scented a mystery, and would have given a good deal to know what was its nature.

Presently the detective peeled off the label, thus exposing to view a second one underneath, with the word "Lxford" upon it.

"Lxford, Lxford!" mused Healy. "That is in Cambridgeshire, about ten or fifteen miles beyond Cambridge, I think. I fancy, bending down, 'there is yet another label underneath.'"

He was right, only this bottom one was not a railway label, but an address stuck on with gum, and it bore, in an uneducated handwriting, the name:

"MISS JOYCE WESTON,  
Passenger to Lxford."

Mr. Healy put it away in his pocketbook, and held up a sovereign, which the lady clutched in his dirty little fingers.

"I'll wish you good day now, Mrs. Jones, and thank you very much for your information," he said, blithely, as he took up his hat.

"You're very welcome, I'm sure, sir; and thank you kindly, too, I suppose, sir," insinuatingly, "you couldn't tell me who this Mrs. Warren is, or what she has been doing?"

"No, Mrs. Jones, I couldn't; that is the very thing I want to know myself."

And so saying, the detective made good his escape, chuckling as he went over this evidence of feminine curiosity.

He had a time-table in his pocket which he consulted, and then drove to Kentish Town Station, and took a ticket for Lxford.

The train did not start for half-an-hour, so he spent the interval in reading the morning papers, which were full of the romantic and



mysterious tragedy that had taken place in W—shire.

"These reporters are clever fellows," he muttered, by way of comment; they contrive to spin out a few facts until they look a great deal, and all the while they are as ignorant as their readers."

At Cambridge he changed carriages, following a middle-aged woman, who had previously asked the guard if "this went to Loxford."

It was an easy enough matter to get into conversation with this person, and presently he learned from her that she kept a shop at Loxford—had done so for the last ten years.

"Then you know some people named Weston living there?"

"Weston. There are two or three families of Weston in the village."

"The Christian name of the young woman I am speaking of is Joyce."

"Poor Joyce!" with an expression of much interest. "Do you happen to know what has become of her?"

"Yes; she is in a situation as lady's-maid in the country."

"I'm glad of that," said the woman, who seemed to be a good-natured sort of person. "There's no reason why she shouldn't keep straight now in spite of what's past."

By a few skilful questions Healy learned Joyce's past history—how she had gone away to London with some rich gentleman, who had deserted her; how she had come back for the birth of her child, and left some five or six weeks later, the baby remaining in the care of her sister Lucy.

"As good a girl as ever lived," emphatically declared his informant.

Healy found his way without any difficulty to the Westons' cottage, where Lucy was sitting sewing in the front room, the baby asleep in a cradle at her feet.

She seemed surprised as she saw the stranger coming up the garden, but invited him to enter, and offered him a chair, which he took.

The cottage was exquisitely neat and clean, so was Lucy herself, but she looked worn and anxious, and the detective's quick eyes noted a newspaper on the table, open at an account of the "W—shire murder."

"I am come to speak to you concerning your sister," he began, and was interrupted by Lucy, who clasped her hands together, exclaiming, eagerly,—

"Can you give me any news of Joyce, sir? We are all growing so anxious about her again."

"Then you haven't heard from her since she left after the birth of the baby?"

"No, sir; not a word."

"And don't even know where she is?"

"No."

"She is in W—shire," said Healy, gravely, "and in great trouble over the death of Mr. Gilbert Farquhar—you have read of his murder in the papers?"

"Yes, sir," said Lucy, breathing a deep sigh, "and I couldn't help thinking it was a judgment on him for his wickedness. Ah! people may say what they like about the wicked flourishing, but there comes a time when God visits them with His wrath, and I used to tell Joyce that time would come for Mr. Farquhar."

Her simplicity told the detective all he wanted to hear, but had not known how to ask. Of course he saw, without any difficulty, that Joyce Weston and Nathalie Egerton's maid were one and the same person, and that Farquhar had been the lover of the latter.

The inference he drew from these facts will be patent to the intelligence of the reader.

"Your sister was treated very badly," he observed, and Lucy exclaimed warmly,—

"She was indeed, sir! And if you could have seen her before she ran away with Mr. Farquhar, you would have said she was one of the brightest and prettiest girls you ever set eyes on—very different to what she was when she came back."

"She must have hated Farquhar, didn't she?"

"Well, that was the strangest part of it—she loved him and hated him at the same time, and I never could make out which feeling was

strongest. When she came home she was dead against him, and as soon as the baby was born her one cry was for him—all her love seemed to come back."

The detective fancied he could trace the phases of feeling through which she had passed. She had gone to London with a view of seeing Farquhar, and then had probably heard of his intended marriage, and, filled with jealous hatred, had answered Nathalie's advertisement, and gone to King's Dene with the intention of working the banker some evil. By means of the spectacles and a different style of dress, she had contrived to disguise herself so as not to risk detection, and then had kept watch on Farquhar's movements.

Healy had no doubt that it was she who had effected an entrance into Nathalie's room, and under an impulse of jealous rage, tried to stab her in the night, but, baffled in her design, she had henceforward directed her machinations against the banker himself—and with a fatal result.

(To be continued.)

## BUT NOT OUR HEARTS.

—10—

### CHAPTER IX.—(continued.)

"No, I won't do that," he said, slowly, thinking for all her good looks that the second Miss Bevoir was rather a nasty, vicious young woman, and quite unaware that envy and jealousy made her so.

"You may regret not doing it."

"I may, yet, somehow or the other, I don't think I shall."

"They will, I am sure, prove most unpleasant tenants."

"That remains to be seen," he said, aloud; adding to himself, "I'd pay them to stay in the little cabin, only to let me have a glimpse of that sweet face now and then."

"I have no patience with Lady Dorothy bringing such objectionable people to our dance. It will be talked about all over the county to-morrow."

"I dare say it will," said the American, pointedly, who had not been blind to the admiration Miss Vane excited. "I am sure Lady Dorothy never thought of the mischief she might do bringing such girls into society."

"Perhaps not. But she ought to have thought. Had she reflected for one instant she would inevitably have come to the conclusion that their presence would be objectionable to us. They are looked upon as little better than savages, and their attire, generally, is that of well-to-do beggars."

"Really. Don't you think the gown she has on to-night is rather pretty-lookin', and certainly simple and becoming?"

"Oh! it's well enough for such a person. I prefer something more stylish," and she glanced down at the yards of shimmering silk, decked with costly lace and flowers, that lay around her in billowing waves, and swept over her companion's feet.

"A more elaborate costume would hardly be suited to such fresh beauty and youthfulness," he said, reflectively, unconscious that he was offering her a fresh affront, and reflecting on her frills and furbelows.

"Indeed! You are quite a critic on ladies' dress."

"I guess I am a little. My countrywomen do dress, you know."

"I know they do, and I am therefore the more surprised, as you must be accustomed to very stylish toilets, that you should have even noticed the wretched flimsy muslin that girl has on."

"Dare say I shouldn't have noticed it on anyone else. But it strikes me as being just the right settin' for such a jewel," he declared, with horrible candour.

"Really, Mr. Spragg, I shall put you down as

Miss Vane's most ardent admirer," she ejaculated with a ghastly smile, that ended in her teeth teeth clenching on her neither lip.

"Don't do that," he rejoined, quietly. "Others who have known her a time must be more ardent than I am. Still, I'll be much obliged by your introduc'g me to the young lady in question."

"You must excuse me," she replied, frigidly, "but as Miss Vane is not known to me, I cannot, of course, presume to introduce any partners to her."

"Surely you may in your own house!" he expostulated.

"I would rather not. And—my mother is beckoning. Excuse my leaving you," and Miss Tina floated across the room with great alacrity, leaving her partner staring after her retreating form in blank astonishment.

He was utterly amazed, and totally unable to account for her extraordinary conduct, and well he might be. He could not look behind the scenes, and see the death's head that grinned at the feast, the poverty that threatened them in the future, the moment the breath was out of Mr. Bevoir's body! He was not a vain man, despite the amount of flattery and attention that had been bestowed on him by members of the fair sex; he never for an instant imagined that any young woman of average good looks would fall in love with his wrinkled, parchment-like face at first sight; and seeing evidences of wealth on every side, it never occurred to him that Clementina was seeking a rich spouse, and would be only too happy to become Mrs. Washington C. Spragg on very short notice.

"Very strange!" he commented, as he walked towards Lady Dorothy, with a view to renewing the acquaintance they had made a few days previously.

"Do you know many here?" he asked after a little conversation.

"Nearly everyone in the room," she made answer.

"It's much pleasanter to know all the people," he observed.

"Yes, if one is a dancer. Doesn't make much difference to me."

"I should have thought it would be pleasanter to sit and watch friends than strangers."

"And note all their peculiarities and absurdities of demeanour, eh?" with a sharp glance at him.

"I did not mean that. Only people one knows are more interesting."

"Well, perhaps you are right; and there are two here who interest me very much."

"Indeed! Some young relatives, I presume?"

"My granddaughters. Here is one coming towards us now. Shall I introduce you?"

"If you please."

"Mr. Spragg, Miss Ruby Vane," and the American found himself bowing before an extremely handsome girl.

"May I have the pleasure of this?" he inquired, offering his arm, which the Duchess accepted at once, and leading her to a quadrille that was being formed.

"You have a sister here, have you not?" he asked, when the dance was over, and they were steering in the wake of others towards the refreshment-room.

"Yes; the sole one I possess."

"Really. Are there but you two?"

"Oh! dear no; we have four brothers."

"Quite a large family."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes; but, then, I am an only child."

"That makes a difference. We think we are just a nice number."

"And so you are for brotherly and sisterly intercourse. Are your brothers grown up?"

"No, boys; two of them little fellows."

"You are not much like Miss Vane. I suppose she is Miss Vane?"

"Yes, and I suppose you thought I was the eldest?"

"You certainly look older; but your aunt having introduced you by your Christian name, I conclude you are not."

"You see you concluded rightly. And what do you think of Opal?"

"Opal!" he demanded, inquiringly.

"My sister," she explained.

"I think she is very lovely," he replied, with an amount of warmth that made the Duchess look at his queer face fixedly.

"Hard hit," she said to herself. "Pity he doesn't fancy me, as I am free. Shouldn't relish a 'dry goods' man, though." Aloud she said (for despite her many faults of character and warped nature, she was not an atom jealous of Opal's superior charms), "Her face is her least beauty."

"Indeed! she must be very perfect then."

"She is in our eyes. Perhaps we are partial critics."

"No wonder if you are; you must be extremely proud of so much grace and amiability."

"We are. The boys idolize her."

"And your parents?"

"Our mother is dead, and father—well—he—like books best," she replied, with an awkwardness entirely foreign to her, and that did not escape her companion's sharp eyes.

"I believe your father is a tenant of mine!"

"Yes; we live at the Rest."

"I hope to have the pleasure of calling on him shortly."

"He will, I am sure be pleased to see you," she replied, snively, her quick brain imagining on the instant great things resulting from the visit.

"May I ask you to introduce me to your sister?"

"Certainly," and she led him over to her sister, who was chatting with Jack Rainham, the rector of Dane's son, a fine young fellow of two-and-twenty, and an old playmate of theirs.

"Opal, Mr. Spragg wishes to be introduced to you."

At these words the girl lifted her head and bowed; but as her eyes met the glance of the American's sunken orbs, twinkling from under their bushy brows, a shudder ran through her from head to foot, and her cheek lost some of its rich bloom.

"Am I too late for a dance?" he asked, with a smile that made the long, grinning teeth look more repulsive.

"No, I have one left, but it is rather far down," she replied, faintly.

"May I have it?" he queried, eagerly.

"Yes," and he took the silver shoe, and inscribed his name on it, while Jack, who had always greatly admired Ruby, sauntered off with her to a quiet nook in the conservatory, and began telling her how much she had improved during the past year while he had been away; how often he had thought of her, and how glad he was that his father could have him for his curate, thus enabling him to remain in the vicinity of the Rest; and many other things that were pleasant to her, and which she listened to, despite the fact that honest Jack's fortune, all told, was barely two hundred a year. But then this alliance with her old playmate was merely an interlude—a pleasant interlude.

She was almost too young to seriously think of marriage for at least a year; when the year was passed, if the opportunity offered, Jack would have to go out of her life, and one or two other things as well, and sufficient for the day, &c.

So she let Jack hold her hand in the dim twilight conservatory, and talk soft nonsense, and put his mouthed lips very near her ear in so doing, and did not give a thought to that future which, however hard and unlovely, would have to be faced—some day.

Meanwhile Washington C. Spragg was improving the golden opportunity, and trying to make himself agreeable to Opal, which he failed to do signally. True, he held a queer sort of fascination for her, because her eyes stole back time after time to that mummy-like face, with its fierce eyes and almost lipless mouth; but at each glance she experienced a sensation of horror and repugnance, and was more than pleased when Paul came and carried her off to supper.

"What was that fellow saying?" he asked, with a backward jerk of his head towards the

mummy, who was escorting Lady Dorothy to a place near them.

"Not much. Asking for dances chiefly."

"Did you give him any?"

"Unfortunately there was one left, which he has taken."

"Unfortunately! Don't you want to dance with him?"

"No."

"He dances very well."

"Not as well as you do."

"That is a matter of opinion, dear. His countrymen are famed for their good valuing."

"That may be. Still, I would much rather he had not asked me."

"You don't admire him then, as most of the ladies do?"

"Admire him! Paul, he is horrible!" Her voice sank to a whisper, and again the roses faded from her cheek, as she caught his eyes fixed on her face.

"Don't look at him," said her lover, provocally, "and he can't shock your delicate nerves."

"I can't help doing so. He seems to fascinate me."

"Oh! indeed, madam. I must stop this fascination," he laughed, and he planted himself in such a position that his broad shoulders shut out from her sight the face that displeased her.

For the rest of the evening he remained as much by her side as possible; he loved her so dearly he could not bear that anything should cause her a moment's pain or annoyance. Yet he was obliged to give place to the American when he came to claim his dance, and hear seeing his arm round his love's lithe form with an appearance of indifference which he was far from feeling.

To Opal that value was awful. She thought she must scream when his arm clasped her, and she felt his face near hers, his hot breath fanning her cheek. He was a perfect dancer, yet the relief she experienced when it was over was intense, and very different from the feeling with which Spragg reluctantly let her go.

"Well, sweetheart, did you enjoy it?" whispered Paul, when they were on their homeward way.

"No—yes," she stammered. "Part of it."

"And that was the part passed with me?"

"Yes, Paul," and then the fair head sank on his shoulder, for Ruby considerably gave up the back seat to them, and pretended to snore in her corner, and under cover of the friendly darkness he stooped his lips till they rested on hers, and took his fill of those sweet carresses the memory of which was to go with him to far lands and distant climes to last him for many long and weary days and silent nights when they were apart, and the mighty ocean rolled between them, and be the only consolation he could have.

## CHAPTER X.

"You won't forget me, Opal, will you?"

They stood together two days later, saying their last adieu down by the Dane levee. The setting sun threw his golden glory into pool and reach, and glittered on the distant river; and the pine woods, tipping the trees with his mellow light, bathing the meadows in a misty radiance, streaming between the dark boles of the trees, with their tawny-leaved branches, and resting on the girl's fair face, and amber hair, till it seemed a mass of precious threads. Standing in such a halo of light her beauty looked unearthly to the man at her side.

"You won't forget me!" he said again.

"Forget you! No, I think I shall not do that," she answered, with a slow, sweet smile of incredulity.

"You might."

"I hardly think so."

"Three years! It is a long time."

"Do you doubt my love, Paul?"

"No, no. Only promise me that I shall be the same to you then as I am now!" he cried, imprisoning her hands in his.

"I can promise that, my dear one. You will

always be the same to me as you are now—the one love of my heart, the first, the best, the dearest—let the time we are apart be three, thirty, or a hundred years. What is time to those who love as you and I do, or even death? I shall but love thee better after death," she quoted, looking at him tenderly.

"I believe you," he answered. "You will be true to me always!"

"Always!" she echoed.

"Yes. Let nothing part us. You know what you are to me. Be merciful, then, and let no other earthly consideration come between us and shut out the sunshine from my existence."

"I will not," she answered, firmly. "You shall ever be my first consideration."

"Thanks, thanks, my darling! I worry and pain you with my prayers and entreaties, and—"

"Nay," she interrupted, softly; "you never pain me—except when you leave me."

"Sweetheart!" he ejaculated, pressing her to his breast, for in that lone spot the only living things that witnessed the embrace were Turk, who sat gravely on his hammock near them, and a wild duck, as it winged its flight o'er the silent moor pools. "How I wish I could stay with you now and always; pass the whole of the rest of my life at your side, never leaving you even for a single hour, sharing every pleasure and every pain; to increase one and lighten the other. Think, Opal, what complete happiness would be ours if I could stay—if an untoward fate did not tear me from you!"

"Nay," she answers, with a tremble in her voice. "I dare not think of it; it would make a coward of me, the contrast between the joy of having you with me always, and the pain of losing you for a long, long while."

"Let us hope the time will pass quickly," he said, cheerily, for he saw the tears sparkling in the azure eyes. "Who knows, perhaps I shall come back sooner than we think!"

"Is there any chance of your doing so?" she cried, eagerly.

"Only a slight one, dear. I fear three weary years must pass before I look upon your sweet face again."

"Oh, Paul!" Her head sunk on to his breast the arms round his throat tightened their clasp convulsively, as though she would keep him with her; and he, seeing how painful the parting was becoming to her, gently loosened the clinging fingers, and pressing a dozen passionate kisses on cheek, lip, and brow, whispered—

"Farewell, my dearest love, farewell. Heaven bless and keep you always," and strode away.

Turk bounded after him, but he ordered him back, and the great fellow shuffled slyly and reluctantly to his new mistress, and so they stood side by side, the dog and the girl, watching the man so dear to them both as he hurried along to Evesham, where he was to take the train to London, and then to Portsmouth to join his ship. Opal had begged to be allowed to see him off from Evesham station, but he was jealously tender of her reputation; and knowing how sharp tongued the gossip of a country town are, and how eagerly they hunt about for the smallest shred of evidence upon which to start a scandal, and tear a reputation to pieces, had gently told her that as she had no one to go with they had better say their last adieu on the Dane levee, unseen and unwatched by prying eyes.

Silently she stood, straining her eyes after the retreating figure, and many and many a time Paul turned to kiss his hand, and wave his handkerchief, until he reached the pinewood adjoining the town. There he stood for a full moment looking at the slight figure standing out distinctly against the background of pale amber sky, athwart which the setting sun shed ruddy rays and purple bars; then with a last wave of the white flag he turned, and plunging into the wood was lost to sight.

Just as he disappeared the sun sank finally to rest in his mantle of deep-hued clouds, and a sudden darkness fell over the earth. To Opal it seemed that all light and brilliance had fled, not only from the world, but from her life, and that the darkness was typical of what her existence would be during the next few years; and with an



uncontrollable fit of anguish she flung herself on her knees, and, hiding her face in Turk's shaggy coat, wept bitter tears, while convulsive sobs shook her frame.

Tark did his best to console her, thrusting his great nose into her eyes, and flicking her face and hands in his endeavours to show his sympathy. At last her grief wore itself out, and rising, she walked slowly towards her home, the mastiff padding in a stately fashion at her side, looking up at her every now and then to see how she was getting on, and uttering a terrible bark of joy when she stooped and patted his massive head.

"Well, has he gone?" asked Ruby, as she entered the "den."

"Yes, he—has gone," with a little catch in her voice that was almost a sob, and which did not escape the other's sharp ears.

"Poor Paul. I wish he could have stayed. You mustn't fret about him," she continued, seeing the other's pain, and face; "he wouldn't like you to do that. You must look forward to his return."

"It is such a long time off," despondently.

"A long time to look forward to, a short time to look back on," said the Duchess, promptly and brightly.

"It will seem a century to me."

"Not if you occupy yourself with other things, and don't brood over his absence too much."

"It is so hard to occupy oneself with other things when one person, and that person absent, fills one's waking thoughts and sleeping dreams, and leaves little room for aught else."

"True. Still I am sure you will do it, as you know what he would wish."

There she struck the right chord, and Opal looked up and said "Yes," quite brightly.

"That is right. Now take off your hat, and have some tea," and Ruby drew down the blinds, shutting out the melancholy dusk of the early autumn night, rang for Jenny to bring in the blazing urn, called the boys in from the garden, and set to work to out bread-and-butter.

"We have had a visitor to-day," she announced looking up from her occupation.

"Have you?" said Miss Vane listlessly.

"Yes. Aren't you curious to know who it was?"

"Not in the least."

"Well—who do you think it was?"

"Aunt Dorothy, I suppose."

"You suppose wrong, then, my dear; guess again."

"Mrs. Marshall."

"Pooh! Mrs. Marshall is much too busy now to be able to pay us even a flying visit, for which I am truly sorry."

"So am I," piped Billie, thinking of the cakes and preserves she invariably brought with her.

"Then if it were not that estimable person it must of course have been the equally estimable, and I have no doubt to you far more welcome, Jack Risham."

"Wrong again," laughed Ruby, while the rich colour mounted to her cheek.

"Then I give it up."

"Really?"

"Certainly. I can't think of anyone else. Our circle of acquaintances is rather limited."

"It is at present; it may widen."

"It may, but I don't think it likely."

"Not probable, yet possible."

"Hardly possible."

"Circumstances alter cases," sententially.

"What do you mean?"

"Aunt Dorothy has come back to England and taken us up again, and now another grand person is being very polite there is no knowing what these attentions may lead to."

"What other grand person?" demanded Opal, with a vague and unaccountable feeling of alarm.

"No less a one than Washington G. Spragg, Esq."

"That horrible man!"

"Complimentary. I don't see that he is so horrible; he looked very well to-day on horse-back."

"What did he come for, the rent?" with an

apprehensive glance at the Duchess, who was calmly pouring out the tea.

"That I can't say, as I did not see him. But I should imagine he simply came to pay a visit."

"Did father see him?"

"No; he was very much *en deshabille*; it would have taken at least half-an-hour to get him out of that old workhouse dressing-gown and into a decent coat, collar, etc., so Jenny was told to say 'out' and Copeland Vane, Esq., has been like a sturdy bulldog robbed of his bone ever since, and declares a great chance has slipped through his fingers."

"A great chance! Of what?"

"That is exactly what I want to know. Perhaps he thinks he might have borrowed a few stray five-pound notes 'of the rich Yankee,' or that he would have adopted the twins, or have asked him to dinner regularly once a week. Wish he would. Save me a lot of trouble if he did," she concluded, with a sigh.

"I hardly think he will do that."

"Nor I."

"I wonder what made him come here!"

"Do you? I don't!" and Ruby's eyes dwelt on the fair face opposite with undiminished admiration.

"Why?" asked the owner of the face, unconsciously.

"Why? Oh! because we are of a good old family," she answered, evasively; "one of the best in the country."

"But we can't do him any good, we are too poor."

"Poverty doesn't matter to him; and, remember, Aunt Dorothy has a handle to her name. It will be something for him to boast about to his friends that he is intimate with the cousin of an earl's daughter."

"Intimate!" ejaculated Miss Vane. "Surely our father does not intend to become intimate with a tradesman?"

"Quite likely that he will, if he thinks he can make anything out of the tradesman."

"But he has not visited for some years past now; he won't be able to throw off the habits of retirement he has contracted since we have lived here."

"Won't he? You don't seem to know much of the capabilities of our respected parent. Before the week is out, unless I am very much mistaken, the poor aristocrat will return the rich snob's visit."

"I hope not!"

"Then your hopes will be disappointed."

And they were.

Copeland Vane, four days after, arrayed in a coat of faultless cut, a hat with much-curved brim, and a pair of tan gloves, remnants of his former prosperous days, walked over to Temple Lane, to return the call of his new neighbour.

"What a mile, what a mile for the child!" he murmured, as he walked up the stately avenue. "To be mistress of a place like this would be a rare stroke of luck. And that young fool Chichester threw it away for a sad, a mere sentimental notion about honour and debts. Pah! He ought to have lived in the middle ages, and have been a knight-errant, not in these prosaic days, when honour's a mere word, and everybody looks after his own interests, let it cost others what it may. Most men's motto nowadays is 'Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' Certainly it is mine, and I don't intend to be the hindmost if I can possibly help it. No, not at all. Being in the front rank suits me best, and having the cream of everything. Lucky fellow this parent. Wonder what his weak point is! Must try and find it out, and make the best of my knowledge when I have found out," and, with a smile on his thin lips, Mr. Vane ascended the steps, and inquired of Benson if his master were at home.

The answer was an affirmative, and he was ushered into the green room, where Spragg was writing.

"Mr. Vane! This is indeed kind of you to return my visit so soon, especially as I understand you are somewhat of a recluse!" he ejaculated,

rising, and welcoming his guest with a warmth that slightly astonished him.

"Not at all," he responded, with that courtly grace of manner he knew so well how to adopt when he chose. "I am only too glad to have the opportunity of telling you how glad I am to welcome you to these parts as a neighbour."

"That's very kind. I am extremely glad to see you, and I hope we shall meet often."

"I hope so. My place, or rather your place, for I understand the Rest now belongs to you, is not a very pleasant spot, but whenever you wish to honour my humble home with a visit I shall be delighted to receive you."

"Thanks. I won't fail to avail myself of your invitation," returned the American, warmly, feeling as though he would like to get up and embrace the haughty-looking pale-faced man, with his delicate patrician features, and dark hazel eyes, in his delight at the invitation which would give him the run of the house in which Opal dwelt.

"It won't bear comparison with the smallest room here, and is anything but—"

"But something you have there will!" interrupted Spragg, quickly.

"And what is that?" he inquired.

"Your daughters."

"Ah! my girls!" he exclaimed, feeling he had stumbled on the weak point, and wondering which it was he admired most.

"They are very lovely!"

"You flatter me by saying so."

"Not at all. It is the truth," he answered, simply. "I have never seen more beautiful faces."

"And doubtless you are a good judge," smiled his guest, "and have seen many types."

"Yes. I have seen handsome women in almost every great city in the world, yet not one that would compare with Miss Vane for delicacy of outline, or Miss Ruby for brilliancy of colouring."

"That is a most complimentary and pleasing speech for a father's ears. But I must ask you not to spoil my girls by saying anything about their good looks to them personally."

"I should not think of doing that," responded his host, hurriedly. "You may trust me implicitly. Young ladies should not be flattered. Their chief charm departs when they become conscious of their beauty and concealed."

"I quite agree with you, and my daughters know little of the world, and are very innocent, not having mixed at all in society."

"Indeed!" remarked the other, with an accent of deep disappointment. "I was hoping that I should meet them at the entertainments in the neighbourhood."

"No. They have not been out as yet, with the exception of that dance at Mrs. Bayolk's, to which their aunt, Lady Dorothy Darwent, took them."

"And where I had the pleasure of meeting them?"

"Yes," acquiesced Vane, with a graceful bend of his shapely head.

"Then—then—I suppose," continued the American, with some hesitation, "that you would not allow them to come here to an entertainment I am thinking of giving?"

"Well—I hardly know," rejoined the other, with an affectionate reluctance he certainly did not feel. "I should not like to refuse your invitation, nor to debar them from what I know would be a great pleasure to them, but—they are so young."

"It is a *forte* I think of giving," explained Spragg, eagerly. "I thought I ought, you know, for the tenantry and villagers."

"Yes, yes, quite right."

"With dancin' and fireworks in the evening. Perhaps you would allow Miss Vane and her sister to come in the afternoon?"

"Well, since you press it, I consent."

"Thanks very much. I shall welcome them to my cabin, and be sincerely glad that they will grace my fête with their presence."

At the word "cabin" Vane lifted his gold-rimmed eye-glasses and stared straight at his host for fully a minute.

"Dressed ugly, and a queer way of expressing

himself," was his mental verdict; aloud he muttered some unintelligible words, meant to be thanks.

"And you will come yourself?"

"I shall have much pleasure in doing so."

"That is right. And now if it will not trouble you too much, will you give me the advantage of your superior knowledge with regard to my neighbours, and tell me whom you think I ought to ask and whom leave out?"

"Certainly," and forthwith the needy aristocrat wrote out a long list for his host, gave him several useful hints, went over part of the house and estate with him, to see if the alterations and repairs were all *comme il faut*, admired his new carriage from Laurie and Marnet's, his new horses from Tattersall's, and his French cook, his German steward, and many of his other possessions; stayed to dinner with him after refusing, and being very much pressed, enjoyed the dainties, long strangers to his palate, that appeared at it, the perfect wines, and the perfect way in which it was served, and finally took his leave, well satisfied with himself and his host, a satisfaction which the latter shared in full, and congratulated himself twenty times during the course of the night upon the evident fact that Copeland Vane meant to be friendly to him, and that that friendliness meant he would often see the face with its soft azure eyes, and frame of amber hair, that had made such an impression upon his hitherto unimpressible heart.

"Which is it?" muttered Vane, as he walked through the dusky lanes on his homeward way. "I'd give a sovereign, and Heaven knows I can't afford it, to be certain. He's deep, in a way, for I couldn't tell for all my fishing which he admires most. But he's hard his (unconsciously repeating what Ruby had said), that's plain enough, and he means business if ever a man did. Now if it is Ruby who has taken his fancy all will be well; she is just the sort of girl to snap at the golden bait eagerly. If it be Opal," he went on slowly, "the task will be more difficult. Still should he wish to make her, and not the other one, mistress of Temple Dene and his vast fortune, mistress she shall be, or else my name is not Copeland Vane."

And the clear starlight, as it fell on the pale face, showed a cruel curve about the thin lips, and a sinister gleam in the dark eyes that boded ill for the future happiness of Opal and her sailor-lover.

#### CHAPTER XI.

A few days later Mr. Spragg rode over to the Rect on Bluebell, followed by a dapper groom on a powerful roan, to give his invitation in person. Mr. Vane expected the visit, and Ruby had orders to hold herself in readiness, and to have shock-headed Jenny in a presentable and Christain-like condition. The result was that the great man escaped being shocked by seeing many evidences of extreme poverty. Rags had been brought from the library and laid down in the drawing-room, the bowls filled with fragrant flowers, fresh curtains put up, and a general clean given; so the place wore a quite respectable aspect, as Spragg stalked in, his riding-trousers tightly strapped down over his shabby boots, and his coat hanging, as usual, in loose and unsightly folds from the nape of his neck.

"What a ghoul!" thought Ruby, as she advanced to meet him, holding some elegant trifle of fancy-work in her slender fingers, for she had orders from her father to entertain him until he had slipped out of the old dressing-gown and slipped into his one sole and only coat, and pair of decent boots.

"Glad to find you at home this time, Miss Ruby!" he said, grasping her hand with a smile that disclosed the whole of his wolf-like fangs to view.

"Yes. We were very sorry to miss seeing you the other day."

"The loss was mine," with another grin.

"And ours too. We wanted to hear how you like Temple Dene, and if you will find it attractive enough to remain in the county."

"I like the place immensely, and I guess," he

continued, slowly, as if revolving something in his own mind, "that I shall find more attraction in and about this spot than I possibly could in any other place in the whole world."

"That is flattering to Dene," she replied, understanding, yet not appearing to understand, what he meant.

"Or its inhabitants!" he returned, pointedly.

"Is your sister in?" he asked the next moment.

"No. She has taken Billie and Turk for a walk."

"Billie and Turk!" he repeated, inquiringly, while his face fell considerably.

"Yes; my younger, or rather smallest, brother, and the mastiff."

"I suppose he is the pet, your brother, I mean, isn't a little fellow?"

"Yes, decidedly with Opal. He is her favourite."

And Spragg made a mental note of that, for use at some future period, when he might want to conciliate Miss Vane.

"And who is your father's?"

"I hardly know," she answered with some embarrassment. "I think he likes us all equally, as he has never shown a preference."

"The fairest thing to do."

"I suppose so. But generally parents have a favourite, and—"

"Ah! delighted to see you," interrupted Vane, entering at that moment, having shed his work-house like attire, as the snake sheds his skin; and shaking Spragg warmly by the hand. "Very good of you to come."

"Not at all. I wanted to give my invitation personally."

"Ah! yes. How are the preparations for the fête going on? Satisfactorily?"

"Yes; I think so—as far as I judge. But I want you to come over and dine with me this evening if you can, and help me in arranging a few details."

"Thanks. Most happy to do so, if my children can spare me," rejoined the arch-hypocrite, glancing at the Duchesse, who played up to his lead, and said with a smile, "We must, I suppose for once in a way."

"That is settled, then?"

"Yes."

"I shall expect you at seven."

"Very well, I shall be punctual. What day have you arranged for the fête?"

"Wednesday week. They told me Wednesday is a half-holiday, and that the school-children would be able to come."

"Yes, of course, the best day."

"Have you mentioned it to your daughters?"

"No. I left that for you to do."

"Well, Miss Ruby. I hope you and—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Vane, laying one of his delicate white hands on the American's arm, "I see my eldest girl coming up through the garden. Will you wait a moment, and give the invitation to her as well?"

"Certainly," returned Spragg with alacrity, wheeling round so that he also could see the white clad figure coming slowly between the flower-beds, the great dog walking at her side, and the child bounding on in front, his hat, which he seemed to object to wear on his head, except when absolutely necessary, in his hand, and his golden curls blown into a tangled shimmering mass about his face, flashed to a brilliant but hectic bloom.

"Call your sister," ordered Vane, briefly.

"Opal, come here!" called Ruby, standing in the window.

"And me too!" asked Billie.

"Yes," she nodded, and he jumped into the room with a glad shout of "Look, look, what I have got. Won't we have a fine—"

But the last words froze on his lips as he caught sight of his father, and saw the cruel eyes fixed on his face, and in his dismay and agitation almost dropped the hat he was carrying.

(To be continued.)

In Southern America rabbits are eaten only by negroes. Squirrels, however, are considered a great delicacy.

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A MOUNTAIN of alum rock is a natural curiosity which exists in China, about twelve miles from the village of Lion Chek. The mountain is about ten miles in circumference at the base, and its height is 1,940 feet. The stones are quarried in large blocks, and after being heated in furnaces are thrown into vats of boiling water. At the bottom of the vats the alum crystallizes in layers about six inches in thickness.

In all Chinese provincial governments there is a provincial mint turning out coinage according to the "tael" standard of the district. At Nanking, which is the city of viceregal administration, there was a delightful arrangement. Until recently the Nanking mint was entirely in the hands of natives, and in order to increase and equalize the "squeeze" as much as possible, the master refused to order any improved machines, and by adhering to the old principle of hand labour, the amount allowed for wages out of the provincial exchequer was kept at its original figure. For stamping the copper "cash," which is the current small coin of China, none but the simplest appliances were used. The metal was put under a punch worked by a strap, and to every strap there was a workman. Unfortunately, in order to make up the official salary, it was found impossible to engage more than a quarter of the men returned as employed in minting, so that when the annual inspection by a high-class mandarin took place it was necessary to search out some of the coolies of the district in order to make a decent show. At the exact moment when the mandarin entered every coolie pulled his strap, and all the copper was instantaneously stamped. To look at the output would have been beneath the dignity of the inspector, so he went away happy, the pay was drawn, and it was only the coin that suffered from being punched in so many unaccustomed spots. There is now a British assayer as "boss," and this gentleman has to be on guard against the perverted ingenuity with which the coins are lightened and adulterated. As with Nanking, so with other provincial exchequers. The coinage of China is a magnificent perquisite of the mandarins, against the loss of which they would struggle with far greater obstinacy than against the loss of the dynasty.



## FACETIÆ

THE BLONDE: "I wish I could play the piano, sweetly!" The Brunette: "Way, you can."

SEN: "I adore all that is beautiful, grand, and noble." He: "Really, you flatter me."

"WELL, old boy, how do you get on at golf?" "Oh, fine; I hit the balls now oftener than do my caddie."

MAUDIE: "Do you think this hat makes me look older?" Clara: "Of course not, dear. I don't see how it possibly could."

AVST JOE: "And do you help your mother when she is cooking?" Beside: "Yes'm, I keep out of her way."

"Your husband seems to be a victim of the tobacco habit." "No; I'm the victim. He thoroughly enjoys it."

"Strong drink," said the temperance orator, "will take the coat from your stomach." "From yer back, too!" said the red-faced man with the pawn ticket.

QUEST: "What! Ten shillings a day! You only charged me six when I was here two months ago!" Hotel Manager: "I know; but the days are longer now."

HICKS: "Do you believe that truth is stranger than fiction?" Street: "Yes; when I tell my wife the truth, it sounds so strange that that's the very time she doesn't believe me."

MABEL (in a whisper): "Go in and ask him, George; if he kicks you I'll marry you anyway." George (piteously): "But, my dear, there's no marrying in Heaven."

WIFE: "Oh, John! I was shopping at Joblots's to-day, and I saw just the sweetest thing there— Husband (diplomatically): "Yes; that's a great scheme of Joblots to have mirrors all through his shop."

"And you think I married you for your money?" tearfully exclaimed young Mrs. Waxwing. "Why, Harold, you know I would have married you if you hadn't a penny, with the excellent prospects you had!"

"Oh, my dear daughter!" (to a little girl of six), "you should not be frightened and run from the goat. Don't you know you are a Christian Scientist?" "But, mamma," excitedly, "the Billygoat doesn't know it."

SEN the man! Is the man starving in the midst of plenty! The man is starving in the midst of plenty. Oh, no; he is not the man whom our iniquitous social system is crushing. He is merely the man who is too obstinate to tip the waiter.

AGENT: "Like some swallows, mum! We fit and fix 'em cheap." Housewife: "I don't want swallows. They keep out the sun, and we get little enough sunshine here as it is." Agent: "You need never use 'em, mum. They'll roll up."

"O, my friends, there are some spectacles that a person never forgets," said a lecturer, after a graphic description of a terrible accident that he had witnessed. "I'd like to know where they sell 'em," remarked an old lady in the audience who is always mislaying her glasses.

MR. JINKS (to landlady): "What kind of a duck did you say this was, Mrs. Dinky?" Landlady: "I didn't say. I simply ordered a duck from the butcher's." Mr. Jinks (struggling with a second joint): "I think he has sent you a decoy duck."

"I wonder what makes a man's hair fall out so fast when once it starts!" "Worry," answered the man who always has an explanation ready. "Nothing tends to make a man bald so much as worry, and nothing worries a man so much as the idea that he is becoming bald."

"PAPA," said little Percy, "why doesn't mamma travel with the circus?" "Why?" Mr. Henpeck asked; "what could she do in a circus?" "She might be the strong woman. I heard her telling grandma the other day that she could wind you round her little finger just as easy as nothing."

"WHAT would you do if you could play the piano as well as I can?" asked a young lady of the housemaid. "Share, an Oi wouldn't get discouraged at all, at all. O'd kape right on larnin' till Oi could play [it] decently," was the reply.

"We mean to try a penny social at the church next time," said Mrs. Watts. "And what's that?" asked Mr. Watts. "Every woman gives a penny for every year of her age." "Better make it a penny for every year she is under seventy. Then the contributions will be long instead of short."

"So you quarrelled with George?" said the girl in the blue blouse. "Yes," answered the other, with much pathos. "Is your engagement broken?" "Oh, no. I told him I never wanted to see his face again, and he said that he would leave me for ever. But we didn't go so far as to break our engagement."

"WELL, how comes on the school exhibition?" "Pretty fair. When I left, the soldier of the legion was dying in Algiers, and they were fixin' for the burial of Sir John Moore, though not a drum was heard—not even a funeral note; and I doubt if we'll hear anything further from it, as some one got up and declared that our law would not ring to-night."

"Is it becoming to me?" asked she, as she paraded, in the costume of one hundred years ago, before the man who is not her lord and master, but is her husband. "Yes, my dear," said he, meekly. "Don't you wish I could dress this way all the time?" she asked. "No, my dear," he replied; "but I wish you had lived when that was the style."

"MAMMA, is Mrs. Thompson's husband cross-eyed?" "Why, no, my dear. Why do you ask?" "Cause when I was out walking with nurse this morning Mr. Thompson stopped us to shake hands with me. And he said, 'What lovely eyes!' " "Yes, you have lovely eyes, my dear." "Yes, but it seemed funny that every time he said it to me he looked at nurse."

LADY: "This is the second time you have received food from me, isn't it?" Tramp: "It is, madam; and you are at liberty to mention the fact to your friends if you wish."

FATHER: "My son, you ought to be married and settled by this time." Adult Son: "Well, I'm not married, but I proposed to Miss Fiftie last night, and she settled me."

MAMMA: "Just look at the front of your new coat! I don't think it is the slightest use to try to keep you clean!" Johnny (eagerly): "Ain't you going to try any more?"

JULIET: "Dearie, did you post that letter I gave you?" Jack (fumbling in his pocket): "Of course—first thing as soon as I got to town, I remember distinctly." Juliet (triumphantly): "Ha, there, I've caught you! I didn't give you any letter to post."

In the early days of the war a large number of Colonists were recruited and hastily flocked into shape. Drill they all detested, but cheerfully put up with it like true Britons. On one occasion an officer was putting a fresh batch through their paces. "Form fours," he shouted, and they bumped into something like order. "As you were," he called, and back they all came except one fat farmer, who stood stock still. "As you were," again yelled the officer in the bewildered man's ear. "Beg pardon, sir," muttered the man, "but I'm blowed if I know where I were."

"Now, Willie, dear," asked his mother, "why did you not come when I called you the first time?" "Because I did not hear you till you called the third time," said little Willie. The heart of the mother was pained at this evidence of depravity. For how, she reasoned, could he have distinguished the third call without hearing the second? "I know it was the third time, mamma," little Willie hastened to explain, "cause you rounded so mad." She clasped him to her bosom. A boy who could bolster up a poor story with a better one was not doomed to remain in obscurity.

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## SOCIETY.

THE Duchess of Albany's life in *future* will be for the most part spent in Germany.

THE Tsar of Russia is an omnivorous reader, and his happiest moments are those passed in the large library at the Winter Palace.

It may not be generally known that the Queen is always provided with chairs rising a certain height from the ground, and that even a discrepancy of half an inch either way causes Her Majesty the greatest discomfort.

AMONG other queenly diarists the ex-Empress Eugénie and the late Queen of Denmark can be named. Some of these volumes will prove exceedingly interesting reading in years to come, if they are ever allowed to be published.

THE Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha's income is a very large one, and her Royal and Imperial Highness can live where she likes. The Obsequies of Rosecan, where the Prince Consort was born, and which has twice been visited by the Queen, is her's for life. The Duchess is a clever woman, and very artistic.

THE Queen has ordered that there are to be no Braemar games. This order was given previous to Court mourning because of the heavy losses sustained by Highland families in the war. The Dedicé season promises to be the dulliest for many years. There are several Royal visitors expected at Balmoral, but they will come and go quietly.

THE news that the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg intends to live at Coburg has given great pleasure in the Duchy, where her Royal Highness has always been very popular. Upon the death of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha it was rumoured that the Duchess would return to Russia, but her Royal Highness, we understand, never contemplated this step.

FROGMORE HOUSE, which has been lent by the Queen to Prince and Princess Louise of Battenberg, is one of the most delightful of the Royal residences attached to Windsor Castle. It is situated at less than a mile from the Castle, and is a beautiful old house, of which the lofty, cheerful rooms curiously recall the apartments of an old French château, the more so that much of the fine furniture is of French origin. Frogmore is full of happy associations to the Royal Family. It was there that the Queen's mother, the venerable Duchess of Kent, spent her happy and peaceful old age; and here the Prince and Princess of Wales passed the first year of their married life.

KING VICTOR EMANUEL is following the example of his father in inaugurating his reign by going with the Queen for a tour of the chief European Courts. His first visit will be made to the Kaiser, and the next to the Tsar. Unfortunately he goes without the blessing of the Pope, who has declared that he will agree to no reconciliation with the Italian Government, and consequently none between the Vatican and the Quirinal. King Victor Emmanuel, has, it is said, determined to reduce the expenses of the Court, as King Humbert did when he first came to the throne. He has expressed his intention of handing over to the State all the palaces, villas, castles and parks, which are not absolutely necessary to the Royal Family, thus effecting a saving to the nation of seven or eight million francs a year.

CLARENCE HOUSE, which is really a part of St. James's Palace, was granted by the Queen to the late Duke of Coburg for his life when he married in 1874. The Duke expended a great deal of his own money on the house, to which he added a storey, and it has some very handsome rooms, and is altogether a most comfortable and exceptionally well-arranged residence. Clarence House has now reverted to the Queen, and it is understood that Her Majesty will offer it to the Duchess Marie; in the highly probable event of her refusing it, the residence may be granted to the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, who at present occupy a suite of apartments in Buckingham Palace when they are in town.

## STATISTICS.

FRENCH people eat 580 lbs. of bread a head, per year.

GERMANY has one doctor for every 1,957 inhabitants.

THERE are 256 railway-stations within a six-mile radius of St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

IN Europe, 1,850,000 square yards of looking-glass are manufactured annually.

IT is computed that in marching, soldiers take seventy-five steps per minute, in quick marching 108, and in charging 150 steps.

## GEMS.

COMPASSION will cure more sins than condemnation.

IT takes a great deal of grace to be able to properly bear high praise.

NO man undertakes a trade he has not learned, even the meanest, yet every one thinks himself sufficiently qualified for the hardest of all trades—that of government.

THE difference between honour and honesty seems to be chiefly in the motive. The honest man does from duty that which the man of honour does for the sake of character.

ANGER is the most impotent passion that accompanies the mind of man; it effects nothing it goes about, and hurts the man who is possessed by it more than any other against whom it is directed.

THAT which becomes a habit in us most easily is the will. Learn, then, to will once, to will strongly and decisively. Thus fix your floating life, and leave it no longer to be drifted hither and thither, like a withered leaf, by every wind that blows.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**TOMATO SAUCE.**—One teaspoonful of tinned tomatoes, or two tomatoes, half-ounce of butter, one shallot, one teaspoonful cornflour, one teaspoonful water, and salt and pepper. Chop the shallot, cut up the tomatoes, and put the ingredients all in a saucepan; boil fifteen minutes, stirring frequently. Rub through a fine sieve or strainer and use.

**BROWN CAPER SAUCE.**—Ingredients: Half pint good brown sauce, one tablespoonful good tarragon vinegar, juice of half a lemon, one teaspoonful anchovy essence, piece of glass the size of small walnut, one large tablespoonful French capers. Put the sauce into a jar, and add to it the vinegar, lemon-juice, anchovy, and glass, and, if liked, half a wineglassful of claret. Boil it and keep it well skimmed. Cut the capers in halves and add them. Season the sauce till nicely flavoured. Make it thoroughly hot and serve.

**STEWED HERRINGS AND POTATOES.**—Say six herrings and at least twelve potatoes—new potatoes are nicest, but old ones do well enough. Scrape the herrings after they are emptied, and wipe them clean. Also cut them across the back three times, not very deep, but nearly to the bone. Take off the head, and you may take the tail off if you like. Now get a pot, not a broad stewpan, but a deep one; the old fashioned round pot used to do this well. Put in a few of the potatoes in the bottom (as dripping or water) then two or three of the herrings, sprinkle plentifully with pepper and salt, then more potatoes, more herrings, salt and pepper, finish with potatoes on the top; put on the lid quite closely, and set on a moderate fire to cook about three quarters of an hour. The potatoes will then be ready. They cook by steam. Don't cut the potatoes, put them in whole.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

A CHINESE drink is made of lamb's skin, bruted with rice, and fermented.

THE strength of a lion has been shown to average only 69 per cent. of the strength of a tiger.

IN blowing out a candle, hold it aloft, and then blow upwards. This will prevent scattering the grease.

TARANTULAS are raised in Australia for their webs, which are used in making threads for war balloons.

A NEW educational plan is being tried in Copenhagen. No books are used, but the boys are instructed orally when they perform at the same time some light manual labour.

THE new Queen of Italy, who is an enthusiastic sportswoman, is very fond of shooting. She is an excellent shot, and thinks nothing of spending a whole day out with her gun.

A LAKE of boiling mud exists near Grobogan, Japan. It is about two miles in circumference, and columns of steaming mud are constantly arising and descending.

MOUSTACHES are not generally worn in winter in Alaska. The temperature is so cold that the moisture freezes on the moustache and becomes a mass of ice, causing frost-bite.

THE children of the Boers, females as well as males, are taught to use the rifle before they are ten years of age. This explains why the Boers are good marksmen.

THE Sahara is not a barren waste, as it is popularly supposed. Not long ago there were 9,000,000 sheep, 2,000,000 goats, and 250,000 camels in the Algerian Sahara alone, and the cases furnish 1,500,000 date palms.

GERMANY'S official catalogue for the Paris Exposition is printed in a new type, the inventory of which is said to be the Kaiser himself. The letters are the ordinary Roman letters with Gothic decorations. The invention is to substitute the new alphabet for the present German type, and to accomplish this object fonts of the new type will be offered to German printing establishments at very low prices.

THERE are a large number of professional bee hunters in Texas, and they are looking forward to a season of unusual prosperity from the sale of wild honey. There are scores of rivers and small streams in the country. Small caves and dark recesses formed by shelving rocks abound along these waterways. They are the natural hives of the wild bees and take the place of the hollow tree trunks of the forest regions of the northern country. These caverns are used year after year by bees, and in many instances they have been found to be literally filled with honey.

BEAUTY, from a Japanese standpoint, consists of a long oval face, regular features, almond-shaped eyes, sloping slightly upward, a high, narrow forehead, and abundance of smooth, black hair. Their movements are graceful, although the style of their dress prevents them from walking with ease; their feet and hands are delicately formed, and their manners unquestionably charming. They take little or no exercise, and one wonders sometimes how the little ladies employ their time—there seems so little to be done in a Japanese house. To begin with, there are no regular meals. The shops near at hand supply daily numberless dishes which seem to be eaten at all hours of the day and night—a few pecks at a time—with those impossible little chopsticks. Very little is kept in the larder except some slices of daikon, fermented turnip, some rice and sweet biscuits. "The honourable live fish" is sold by men who carry around large water-tubs from house to house, and cut off as much as is required from the unfortunate fish, and replace the sadly mutilated but still struggling remains back in the tub. Eggs are cheap and plentiful; bread is never used, so there is no necessity for an oven. The great staidy is tea. A Japanese lady it seldom seen in her home without the quaint little tea-tray by her side, and the inevitable pipe, containing one whiff of tobacco, which is in constant requisition.



# NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**REPAIR.**—We do not know of such special school.

**M. B. C.**—Census of population is taken every ten years.

**BILL.**—There are many books published on the subject.

**R. R.**—It was the site of the palace of the kings of England.

**HOCKEY.**—To prevent salt from caking add a little arrowroot.

**A. G.**—She can take steps to make you pay for the maintenance.

**A. L.**—We can find no such word; it is possibly a slang phrase.

**ANY.**—To cut hard-boiled eggs in smooth slices dip the knife in water.

**IMPORTANT.**—Write to your neighbours and ask them to share the nuisance.

**EVA.**—It is usual that there should be a mutual return of all presents and letters.

**OLD READER.**—You can do as you wish, but any goods you remove must be your own property.

**BETA.**—We know of no way to "extract" the smell; when exposed to the air it soon evaporates.

**G. G.**—The smell of onions may be removed from the breath by eating parsley salted with vinegar.

**MRS.**—We are not aware of any hairdresser preparation which will turn dark brown hair to a lighter tint.

**R. M.**—Shopkeepers cannot be compelled to sell their goods at the prices ticked on them in their windows.

**WOMAN.**—To prevent the disagreeable smell of stale smoke in sitting-rooms, stand a pan of cold water in them all night.

**CONSTANT READER.**—Dissolve some Epsom salts in a little beer, and apply with a sponge or brush on the inside of the window.

**MALCOLM.**—Your best course would be to address a letter to the young lady's father, requesting permission to pay your addresses to her.

**GRACE.**—Put a layer of sand upon the oven shelf under it; that prevents bottom from being burnt or over-cooked before top is ready.

**ANXIOUS.**—Such appointments generally fall to sons or friends of officials. We know of no special way of arriving at the position you desire.

**G. D.**—Fill the nursing bottle with strong ammonia water and some small pieces of potato peel, then shake vigorously and rinse with clear water.

**MRS.**—Take some home-rinses in clean cold water, not too dry, and they will be delightfully fresh and clean next time you want to use them.

**R. B.**—If the lad said he was eighteen years of age, and looks like that, we are afraid you cannot get him off; it would be against the War Office rule.

**ECONOMICAL.**—You can save all the bread scraps by drying them in the oven, then with the rolling-pin they can be crushed for puddings, tarts, etc., and soups.

**T. N.**—Few things are more soothing for burns or scalds than the white of an egg poured over the injured place. It is more cooling than sweet oil and borax.

**L. G. B.**—Mildew stains can be removed by rubbing plenty of soap and powdered chalk on the garment and placing it in the sun. It may be necessary to repeat the operation.

**P. C.**—A far less troublesome plan is to take them out as soon as possible by soaking them in milk, changing the milk if it gets very stained before the ink is removed.

**LENA.**—It would be impossible for us to advise you yet the number of bridesmaids it would be well for you to have unless we knew something about your circumstances.

**GERALD.**—Pour into a deep dish, and stand the boots in it, so as to allow the acids present in it thoroughly for a few days. If this does not remove the annoyance, repeat the process.

**THOMAS.**—Have a cup of cold water always by you when at work, and a clean piece of muslin or flannel, and with either remove the sweat at once it is seen; and do not touch it with your fingers.

**S. H.**—Ice can be kept well even during the warmest weather. Wrap it in several thicknesses of flannel and place in the ice-chest on four crossed pieces of wood so that no water will accumulate under it.

**PHIL.**—If you clean them with ammonia and milk they will gradually get a rich, dark brown colour. If you want to blacken them, wash first with strong soda-water; let dry, and black and polish in the usual way.

**MARY.**—A monthly servant can give or get notice on leaving or dismissal at any time to terminate an engagement within a month from date of the notice; it is not necessary that the warning should be given at a month's end.

**R. Y.**—The best agent we know of for removing fat or oil stains is benzine, more or less diffused with water. But if the stain has been in the garment for over two years, it is somewhat doubtful as to its thorough removal being accomplished.

**CURIOS.**—The word *Lale*, as applied to a certain kind of glove, history, &c., was originally the name given to "a fine hard-twisted linen thread," made at Lille or Lale in France. The name is simply a commercial name now.

**R. H.**—A little rock ammonia and a piece of common soda put into a quart and about half a pint of boiling water poured on to dissolve them. Then when cold sponge the silk with the liquid on the right side and iron it on the wrong.

**BERRY.**—Make a paste with sweet-oil and bath-brick scraped as finely as possible. Rub with this till all stains have disappeared, and then polish with dry powdered Bath-brick, giving a final rub with a duster dipped in dry whiting.

**VERA.**—A man cannot only be nominated for two Parliamentary constituencies, but elected for both as well; on that happening he must decide which of the two it is his intention to sit for, and a new election will then proceed in the other.

**LALIE.**—Have you ever tried spraying their holes with a strong solution of carbolic acid? Two tablespoonfuls of the acid to a pint of water is the right proportion, and the holes should be well sprayed with it every day for a fortnight.

**R. R. B.**—People who listen to slanderous tales are not always disposed to believe the vile reports. A girl who accuses herself in circulating slander will soon turn self-respecting listeners against her, and she will be shunned as a despicable creature.

**DAISY.**—Wild flowers make the prettiest possible sort of decoration for a country house. A safe rule is to avoid mixtures, while securing variety by the aid of foliage. Choose only one or two kinds of flowers at a time, and see that they are of striking form or colour.

## A SONG OF EVENING.

In the last enchanted gray light  
That is neither night nor day,  
In the shy light of the twilight,  
Soft and shady, little day,  
Comes a-roaming through the glens,  
Comes a-ringing such a singing  
As a nightingale can only  
When he's lonely send a winging.

And the dear delicious glamour  
Of his tender-hearted glamour  
Makes the red blood surge and hammer,  
And the pulses thrill and start;  
Oh, my lady, little dear one,  
With your shining eyes so near one,  
All the world is full of rapture  
At the capture of your heart.

So the while we listen nightly  
To the bird that lilteth brightly,  
Kiss me lightly, where all whitely  
Gleams the stars in heights above,  
While the twilight dews and darkness  
And the brooding silence harkens  
To my pleading to your hearing,  
Little love!

**MILKMOOT.**—Wash them in a warm lather made with pure white hard soap. This water should be blued, also the rinsing water. Roll up tightly in a cloth, and from the handschiefs between linen. The iron must not touch the silk, otherwise it will turn yellow.

**AMERICA.**—Break up four poppyheads; pour about two pints of boiling water over them, and boil for ten minutes; then add two ounces of ammonia, dowers, and boil for another five minutes. Strain off the liquor, and bathe the face frequently, or dip flannel into it.

**BERRY.**—To keep butter firm in warm weather cover it with a large clean flower-pot; dip a piece of coarse flannel in cold water, lay it over the flower-pot and sprinkle freely with salt. The salt keeps the flannel moist, and this simple contrivance keeps the butter firm and cool.

**HAT.**—All military rank, from lance-corporal to Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief is "conferred by the Queen," who is nominal head of the Army, and delegates her power of conferring rank to officials; all officers in the higher ranks have their commissions signed by her for the Queen.

**R. B.**—Meat that looks the least bit tainted should be thoroughly cleaned before cooking. The method is simple. Put a little permanganate of potash in a bowl of cold water, wash the joint well in this, letting it lie till sweet. Failing the permanganate use vinegar and water.

**MATER.**—Different children require different kinds of food. What may be beneficial to one is often harmful to another. It is best not to give the young much meat. Encourage a youngster to partake freely of fat in a pure form—that is, oil from nuts, butter, and cream. Fats are of great importance, because they are necessary to supply warmth as well as nourishment to the body.

**DUN-DUN.**—The dun-dun bullet gets its name from Dun-Dun, India, where it was first made by the British Government. It has a hollow brass top, and when it strikes its victim the top becomes umbrella-shaped, and tears its way through the flesh, making a wound that is in most cases incurable. It is said that blood poisoning sets in within half an hour after the bullet strikes.

**BEAST.**—This is simply because, after trimming it, the wick is turned up rather high ready for lighting the next time. If after trimming you turn the wick well down below the top of the tube through which it passes, the oil will not ooze out and make the outside of the lamp greasy and unpleasant to touch.

**TRIMMING.**—To remove quickly the paper from the bottom of a cake hold it in front of the fire. When an oven is too hot for the proper baking of its contents put a basin of cold water inside. Never slam an oven door when anything is baking. Such a proceeding will ruin the contents.

**GRACE.**—One pound of loaf sugar and one gill of water to every pound of fruit. The sugar should be weighed when the currants are removed from the stalks. The currants must be very ripe and gathered on a fine day, and should when stripped from the stalks be boiled with water for ten minutes to draw the juice. They will need about an hour in all to boil, and must be ceaselessly stirred.

**E. J.**—Use good materials; do not lay it on too thick; rub it in sufficiently, and allow plenty of time for drying between each coat, carefully spirit off, and all will be well. Sometimes it is well to give a light glass-papering (with the finest, and partially used paper), after the first coat is quite dry, and in some cases, first and second coats have to be lightly glass-papered in this way. Your own judgment must be your guide in the matter.

**HOPS.**—The best soap for cleaning paint is made by taking one ounce of powdered borax, one pound of the best brown soap cut in small pieces, and three quarts of water. Put all in a kettle, set on the back of range until the soap is dissolved, stirring frequently. It must not come to a boil. Use with a piece of old, soft, white flannel. It cleans paint without injuring it; it is also beneficial for the hands, and much better for washing clothes than any other soap.

**PASSPORT.**—The present passport is not the old passport of international law. That was a safe conduct to a man, with permission to go through a country, given by the ruler of that country. It then became a paper given by a sovereign to a traveller, requesting the sovereigns of the countries to be visited to permit him to enter. The language used in our passport now is to let the person to whom it is issued "pass freely and to give him all lawful aid and protection."

**AMATEUR NURSE.**—Any conversation should be carried on in the ordinary pitch, whatever needs to be said should be spoken in such a tone that the patients may hear it if they wish. It does not necessarily follow that sick persons are asleep because their eyes are shut; they may be acutely conscious of all that is passing in the room, though unable or unwilling to make any sign; and nothing can be more nerve-proving than hush-hush and whispering around and creaking about on the tips of the toes.

**LEAP YEAR.**—The twentieth century will have twenty-four leap years, the greatest number possible. February will have five Sundays three times—1929, 1948, and 1978. The earliest possible date on which Easter can occur is March 12th. The latest date it occurred on that date was 1818. The latest date that Easter can occur is April 25th. It will occur but one time in the coming century on that date—1948. The middle day of the century will be January 1st, 1951. There will be 360 eclipses during the coming century.

**CLAIR.**—An ordinary silk or cotton sunshade can be washed with soap-and-water. Make a paste with soft and lukewarm water, dip a nail brush in it, and scrub till it looks clean. Rinse thoroughly in several lots of water, and dry in a fine open air, but in the shade. If there is any trimming it is best to remove it before washing, as lace or anything of that kind can be washed and ironed far more easily if unpicked. Iron it on several thicknesses of flannel, as this makes the pattern stand out much better than if it is ironed in the ordinary way.

**ISABELLA.**—If the silk is light, make a paste with fullers' earth and water, to which a little ammonia has been added. Smear this over the spots, iron under a thick layer of blotting-paper till dry, and brush off with a perfectly clean clothes-brush. For dark silk the best plan is to put a layer of powdered magnesia over the spots, iron under blotting-paper, and then, while still warm, rub the spots with benzine, using, if possible, a piece of the same material. Remember that benzine is highly inflammable, and must not be used near a light or fire.

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